

10-1-1938

Sermon Study on Heb. 13:1-9

Theo. Laetsch

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

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Recommended Citation

Laetsch, Theo. (1938) "Sermon Study on Heb. 13:1-9," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 9 , Article 71.
Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol9/iss1/71>

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all manner of false worship, not only against gross idolatry, vv. 11-17, but against every neglect of their divinely prescribed worship, or cult, 18-26. "For after the tenor of these words," אֲבָרָא, according to the mouth, the saying, the exact wording of the words which I have just spoken, "did I make My covenant with you." His covenant made on Mount Sinai contained not only moral commandments, it comprised also many laws pertaining to the form of worship, to the ritual, the cult. This lesson they had forgotten; they had worshiped God in a manner forbidden by Him. This was the lesson that had to be stressed by Him in renewing His covenant. That explains why Ex. 34:10-27 repeats not the Decalog, but only laws pertaining to worship, all of which are to be found in the original covenant legislation of Ex. 20-23.

There can be no doubt that according to the divine records found in the Pentateuch the two sets of tables of stone contained the written Decalog. Whether the Decalog was written in the form found in Ex. 20:2-17, which I regard as most probable, or in the form of Deut. 5:6-21, or combining the two forms, is of little consequence; in each case it was the Decalog, the Ten Commandments, the words which Israel had heard out of the cloud and the fire.

TH. LAETSCH

Sermon Study on Heb. 13:1-9

Eisenach Epistle-lesson for the Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews is as little known as its addressees. This uncertainty as to the identity of the writer and the readers of this letter does not render the purpose of the letter uncertain and dubious. The recipients of the letter were quite evidently Jewish Christians, long-time members of the Church, 5:12, who had endured "a great fight of afflictions," 10:32-34. They had experienced to the full the persecutions foretold by the Savior, Mark 10:21, 22, and they may still have been in the thick of the fight when this letter was written. Evidently they were finding it increasingly harder to endure to the end, since there seemed to be no end of their persecution in sight. Or if the bloody persecution had ceased or abated to some extent, they were, as adherents of a *religio illicita*, still misunderstood, ostracized, slandered, by their heathen neighbors and hated with bitter malevolence by their own fellow-Jews. Because of their faith in the crucified Jesus they were still made to feel that they were regarded as the offscouring and the refuse in the midst of the people, Lam. 3:45. And "they found the long sustained conflict with sin, 12:4, and the day-by-day contempt and derision they experienced as Christians, 13:13, more wearing to the spirit than sharp persecu-

tion." (*Expositor's Greek N. T.*, p. 235.) They were in grave danger of apostasy, of returning to Jewish ritualism and ceremonialism, from which they had been delivered by the preaching of the Gospel of Christ Jesus. In order to reestablish their wavering faith, the author calls their attention to the superiority of the New Covenant, into which they had entered through faith in Christ, over the Old Testament covenant, to which they wanted to return, to the danger of going back to the shadows, which could never make perfect, 10:1, and of losing the body, the true Mediator, infinitely greater than Moses, the perfect High Priest, far surpassing the priests of the Old Covenant. In the verses immediately preceding our text he had called to their mind the instability of the Old Covenant over against the immutability of the New Testament and had exhorted them: 12:28. As a practical *Seelsorger* he points out a number of instances of serving reverently and with godly fear that God who through Christ's atoning blood had become their Father, yet is and remains a consuming fire.

Let brotherly love continue, v. 1. *Φιλὰδελφία* is used in the New Testament only of that love which binds the hearts of Christians together in mutual affection in the knowledge that they all are the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, Gal. 3:26-28. This love, engendered in the Christians through the power of the Holy Spirit, is to continue, abide, remain unchanged, in spite of all the efforts on the part of Satan to quench it, to cool its ardor. Christians are taught of God to love one another, 1 Thess. 4:9, and taught in a manner which enables them to practise what they have learned, John 15:16, 17. Yet they are in constant need of being admonished to remain constant in this love. There are so many considerations which tend to make them forget that there are no closer ties than those of common faith in Jesus, making all believers members of one family, brethren and sisters in Christ. "In our times, when so many false brotherhoods are established, claiming to be superior to our brotherhood in Christ, urging their claims and their benefits to the detriment and even disruption of our spiritual brotherhood in the faith and confession of Christ, it is especially necessary to emphasize the divine character of the bond of brotherly love which unites us as believers in Christ and to urge all our brethren ever to continue therein, cutting loose from every antagonistic tie." (Lenski, *Hebrews*, p. 476.)

Let brotherly affection continue even if the brother seems not at all worthy of our love; as long as he is a Christian, a member of the household of God, so long he is our brother, to be regarded and loved by us as our own flesh and blood. Let this brotherly affection remain unchanged even if the brother has offended you, insulted you, slighted you, harmed you, spoken evil of you, even if your flesh cries out for revenge. Let us walk in love as Christ

hath loved us and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice, Eph. 5:2, wholly unworthy though we are of such love.

This love will manifest itself in various ways, two of which the apostle names in vv. 2, 3.

Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares, v.2. Do not forget to entertain strangers, such as are not members of your household; to practise hospitality, entertaining not only your friends and relatives, who in turn will invite you, but to go farther, to receive into your home also those Christians whom you do not know, who are in poverty and want and look to you for your assistance. The word φιλοξενία implies more than the mere entertaining. It expresses that love of strangers which will look upon hospitality not only as a Christian duty, grudgingly observed because one does not wish to lose one's good standing. It expresses that love of the strangers which will treat the unknown Christian, less refined, less cultured, perhaps, with brotherly affection, and open one's house and one's heart to him, bid him a cordial welcome, as one would receive and welcome one's own flesh and blood. Such φιλοξενία is possible only where there is true φιλαδελφία.

Such hospitality is not always an easy matter. To hear a rap at the door and to see a family ragged, tired, hungry, standing there, telling their tale of persecution, of exile from home, of days of wearisome travel, and looking to the fellow-Christian for food and lodging, not for one day only but for weeks and perhaps months; to make up with children swarming over the house, to be obliged to give up one's privacy, one's convenience, and share one's food and income with utter strangers, who perhaps were not always as considerate and grateful as they ought to have been, was a severe test of brotherly love. Surely the flesh rebelled, revolted. Moreover, such hospitality frequently exposed the Christian to persecution. It was a public confession that one was also a Christian, an adherent of a *religio illicita*, a religion declared illegal, prohibited by the state. Cp. Jason's experience, Acts 17:5-9. The admonition was in place in the days of the early Church, and it is indeed in our day. Be not forgetful of entertaining strangers. The word *forget* designates the hiding of oneself in one's own interest, hence to forget, to neglect one's duty toward the needy brother. Cp. Is. 58:7. In order to make his readers the more willing to love hospitality, the author reminds them of the fact that thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Cp. Gen. 18:3; 19:2. Though we may never have a like experience, yet let us treat all that come to us in need of food or clothing or lodging or advice as we would treat angels, no matter how little our guests may resemble angels. Christ tells His Christians: Matt. 25:38, 39. Be lovers of hospitality!

There was another class of Christians in need of Christian brotherly love, the prisoners, in fact, all that were being shamefully treated, tormented, maltreated, for Christ's sake. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body, v. 3. The Christians addressed in this letter had in the past shown their love to these unfortunate brethren, as we learn Heb. 6:10; 10:32. For some reason they were in danger of neglecting these brethren. Remember them "as bound with them." "By means of the συμπάθεια of the members (cp. Heb. 10:34; 1 Cor. 12:26) we should look upon ourselves as bound with them" (Delitzsch) and feel their imprisonment as if it were our own. Such sincere sympathy will go far to alleviate the hard lot of the prisoners, who, after all, are human and in need of brotherly love and consideration. Paul's chains seemed the heavier to him since his brethren neglected and forsook him in the hour of danger, 2 Tim. 4:16, while his heart was refreshed and comforted by the visits of faithful Onesiphorus, 2 Tim. 1:16-18, and he pleads with Timothy not to be ashamed of him, a prisoner, chap. 1:8. This sympathy may be shown in various ways, by visits paid to prisoners, Matt. 25:39; by supporting them, Phil. 4:10-19; by making them more comfortable, Acts 16:33 f., or, if that is not possible, by praying for them, Acts 12:5. Likewise all that were being afflicted should be remembered by these Hebrew Christians "as being yourselves also in the body." Bear in mind that you may suffer like afflictions at any time and do unto your brethren as you would have them do unto you. Let your brotherly love continue, also when the brethren are because of their faith imprisoned, maltreated.

Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge, v. 4. Γάμος usually in the New Testament denotes the wedding, the marriage festival. Our text is the only instance where it denotes the estate of marriage, wedlock, a meaning quite frequent in the papyri and found in the LXX, Wisdom 14:24: "They kept neither lives nor marriages undefiled," and v. 26: "disorder in marriages." The sentence is not merely declaratory, as if the writer meant to defend the sanctity of wedlock against asceticism, which regarded it as an unclean state, to be avoided by all earnest Christians. This misconception of the writer's intention led to a change of the connective, adopted also in the Authorized Version and in Luther's translation, whereas by far the most and best manuscripts offer "for," γάρ, which only suits an exhortation. And an exhortation is demanded by the preceding and following context, which is made up of a series of admonitions. In v. 5, moreover, we have the very same construction to express an admonition.

Marriage is to be held in honor in all, rather, in all respects. If "all" referred to persons, the simple dative would be used; cp. Acts 5:34; 20:24. In all matters relating or pertaining to marriage it is to be given the honor due it. The Lord honored wedlock by instituting it Himself before man had fallen, Gen. 2, by granting certain rights and privileges to all married people, and to them exclusively, Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4, 5; Prov. 5:18, 19; by establishing it from the very beginning as a lifelong estate; by protecting it later by one of the commandments of His Decalog. This divine institution is to be held honorable in all respects, to be violated in no manner by any person, married or unmarried. It is not to be desecrated by the divorces so common in the days of the early Church both among the Gentiles and the Jews, when divorce was so generally practised and was regarded as so permissible a matter that even the disciples were astonished to hear Christ forbid divorce except for fornication, Matt. 19:10. And just as wide-spread were other sins with respect to this divine and sacred institution. One need but read the many admonitions both in the gospels and in the epistles to avoid fornication and uncleanness and the shameful impurities named Rom. 1:24-27, so common in the pagan world; one need only think of the prevalence of divorce and immorality in our day to understand the need of the warning of our text to keep marriage holy and the bed undefiled. Κοίτη originally denoted a place for lying down, a bed; then the marriage bed, sexual cohabitation, carnal intercourse. The apostle does not forbid carnal intercourse in marriage, nor does he declare it defiling. On the contrary, if it is to be kept undefiled, it must be in itself a clean and pure act. It is not only permitted but commanded by God. Yet there should be no defilement of the marriage bed, no wilful evasion of the divine commandment in Gen. 2:28 by unnatural, sinful means, by means not in keeping with His will nor granted by His wisdom and power; no malicious destruction of the seed, no other impurities that defile the body, dishonor and degrade both husband and wife, make them slaves of lust and immorality. For "whoremongers and adulterers," married or unmarried fornicators and impure persons, "God will judge." Their sins done in secret may remain unknown to others; God, however, sees them, knows them, sets them in the light of His countenance, and pronounces His judgment of temporal penalties and of eternal damnation upon them.

In keeping with the Decalog and general Scriptural usage the writer links up the warning against covetousness with that against adultery.

Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have; for He hath said, I will never leave

thee nor forsake thee, v. 5. The first clause consists of only three words in the original, and very emphatically the word ἀφιλάργυρος, "without covetousness," is placed at the beginning. Not silver-loving, silver here being used in the sense of money; free from the love of money "let your conversation be," ὁ τρόπος. This is the only instance in the New Testament of a usage of this word quite frequent in the classical writers, that of turn, trend, bent, of mind, disposition, character. Not silver-loving the character! While the translators here have used the word covetousness, the noun is translated "love of money" 1 Tim. 6:10, where this love is designated as one of the roots of all manners of evil. The English word covetousness well describes that desire, that lust for money, which loves money either for its own sake or for the sake of the things that it can buy. Not only the miser greedily hoarding his silver and gold, gloating over it, attached to it, bound to it so closely that he cannot part from it, is guilty of covetousness, of lust for money. The man who spends money with a lavish hand, who literally throws money away, may be just as much enamored of silver as the close-fisted skinflint who denies himself and his family the very necessities of life only to be able to pile up a few more dollars. Money will buy the conveniences and luxuries that one regards as the essentials of a happy life or that place in society among the *élite* which another has made the goal of his ambition, or political offices and political power, or opportunity for scientific research, or for a life of leisure, or for travel, or for a care-free old age, or any one of the thousand and one things that man regards as essentials for an ideal life. And since some of the aims and objects are permissible, honorable, noble even, the unfortunate victim does not realize that with the love for his noble ideal the love of money, the lust for it, will insinuate itself into his life and take possession gradually but surely and ever more thoroughly of his heart and mind to the point of exclusion of love toward God and his fellow-man. Mammon has bound him with fetters formed of silver and gold but just as unbreakable as if they were forged out of iron or steel, and by these fetters he is being led deeper and ever deeper into foolish and hurtful lusts and finally dragged down into everlasting destruction and perdition. Since love of money is so dangerous, so insidious an enemy, therefore let your conversation be without covetousness, your character free from love of silver.

And be content with such things as ye have. The apostle uses the participle construction in order to stress the necessity of continuous, habitual contentment. It would be rather awkward, however, to connect this clause with the preceding admonition. There the character is the subject, here the Christians. We have here

one of the instances where the "participle carries on the work of either the indicative or the imperative" (Robertson, *Grammar*, 1st ed., p. 1133); cp. Rom. 12:9-14; Col. 3:16. The translation of the Authorized Version is correct. Ἀρκεῖν, to be sufficient, as the grace of God to Paul, 2 Cor. 12:9; a supply of bread, John 6:7; the passive means to be satisfied, content, with something, Luke 3:14; 1 Tim. 6:8. Love of money and contentment are mutually exclusive; cp. 1 Tim. 6:5-11. Love of money causes worries, sleepless nights, nervous prostration, dissatisfaction, envy, unhappiness, and often leads to murder and suicide. Contentment, being satisfied with what God has given, with what is at hand, makes for a happy and enjoyable and peaceful life. Coupled with godliness, without which true contentment is not possible, it characterizes the ideal Christian life. Needless to say, such Christian contentment is *toto coelo* different from laziness and shiftlessness, that *dolce far niente* which is satisfied with just drifting along and letting others work and worry while one does nothing, 1 Thess. 3:6-14; cp. also Gen. 1:28. While working, while being progressive, be content with such things as you have. There is no need for anxious worries, even if we have not as much as we think we need or ought to have; "for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He, αὐτός, Himself. In post-Biblical Hebrew אֱלֹהִים, translated αὐτός in the Septuagint, is a common designation for God, 1 Macc. 3:22; Wisdom 6:7; 7:17, etc. This usage is in exact agreement with the original meaning of the word, that of singling out an individual, placing him opposite to, and above, all others, hence a very proper designation for Him who is the Holy, the infinitely Exalted One, Is. 57:15. This Supreme Ruler of the universe "hath said." The perfect expresses an action which has been completed, whose consequences and effects still continue. The words to which the writer refers were spoken ages ago; yet they still stand firm and immovable and still are as effective as when they were first spoken; cp. Ps. 33:4, 9, 11. The promise quoted by the author is found in various forms in a number of passages, Gen. 28:15; Deut. 4:31; 31:6, 8; Josh. 1:5; 1 Chron. 28:20. In Deut. 31:6 Moses promises Israel that God will not forsake them; in v. 8 the promise is given in identical words to Joshua; in both instances the third person is used. In Josh. 1:5 again the identical words are used in the original, this time in the first person, God Himself addressing Joshua. The Septuagint translation of Josh. 1:5 varies considerably from that of Deut. 31:6, which approaches more closely the wording of our text than the translation of v. 8. Since Philo also gives the quotation in the exact wording of our text, we may reasonably assume either that both our author and Philo translated *literatim* the passage as found Josh. 1:5 or that they quote another version,

which besides that of the Septuagint was current among the Hellenistic Jews for synagogical or private use. Be that as it may, in both cases it is a promise spoken by God through His representative Moses in Deut. 31:6, 8; by Himself personally to Joshua, Josh. 1:5. The word translated "leave" is the translation of the Hebrew פָּרַךְ , to sink, to abate; cp. Judg. 8:3; the hiphil, to cause to sink, to let sink, let go, desert, forsake. Ἐγκαταλείπειν means to leave completely, as it were, submerged, κατά , in, ἐν , the Hebrew בְּיָם , Ps. 22:1. Cf. Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34. Both terms express the same idea, the latter term being the more forcible. God will not let us sink nor leave us in straits, completely submerged. Dire needs may surround you, into straits you may come, I shall not leave you nor forsake you, Ps. 43:7-11; 66:8-12; 93:1-4; Is. 43:2; Matt. 14:24-33. He, the Holy One, inhabiting the praises of Israel, will not leave nor forsake those for whom His own Son hung on the cross forsaken, Ps. 22:1-5.

So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me, v. 6. "So that," ὅστε , defines more accurately the magnitude and extent of the promise just given and its marvelous effect on all who accept this promise in true faith. This word of the Lord is of such power, of such dynamic effect, "that we may boldly say." θαρσύνειν is frequently used in the Septuagint for "Fear not," Gen. 35:17; Ex. 14:13, and is one of the favorite expressions of the Savior, Matt. 9:2; 14:27; Luke 8:48; John 16:33; Acts 23:11, any or all of which passages may be used as examples of conditions under which we may and should be of good cheer, fearless, courageous, bold.

"The Lord is my Helper." The writer quotes Ps. 118:6; cp. also Ps. 27:1. "I will not fear what man shall do unto me," Luther's translation "Was sollen mir Menschen tun?" What shall man do unto me? is in better keeping with the original text and Greek grammar. Note the contrast between "Lord," placed emphatically at the head, and "man," placed significantly at the end of the sentence. "Man" is used without the article in order to express the qualitative nature of the term. Man as man in contrast to the Lord, Jehovah, is but dust and ashes, Gen. 18:27, as clay in the hand of the potter, Is. 29:16; Jer. 18:1-10. Men may be ever so powerful, ever so cunning, ever so determined, in His sight they are less than nothing and vanity, Is. 40:15, 17, 22, 23; 52:12, 13. Jehovah is very properly placed at the head, man at the end, and between the two the believing child of God, unfearing, undismayed. He looks first at the Lord, the great I Am, He is my Helper; and then with all the faith and with all the courage this knowledge engenders in him, boldly looks his enemies in the face, "What can do to me — man?" What can man effect against me on whose side, as the mighty Helper, is the Lord? I shall not fear!

Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, v. 7. "Remember," the present, durative imperative, keep remembering, retain in your memory, "them which have the rule over you," τῶν ἡγουμένων, "the substantivized descriptive present participle" (Lenski), your leaders. This word is used of civic and church leaders, in the latter sense already in the Septuagint, Ecclus. 30:27 (Rahlfs edition, 33:19): "Hear me, ye magnates of the earth, and give ear, ye leaders of the Church." In the New Testament it occurs only Acts 15:22, "chief men among the brethren," leaders in the congregation, in Heb. 13:17, 24 of the leaders in the congregation addressed, and in our text. Here the apostle, as we shall see, evidently speaks of such leaders as had entered their eternal home. Yet, though they were dead and buried, their memory should not die with them. Scripture regards it as a penalty and a curse to have one's remembrance cut off from the earth, Deut. 32:26; Ps. 9:5; 34:16. While the name of the wicked shall rot, the memory of the just shall be blessed, Prov. 10:7; Ps. 112:6. The Christian congregation should do its part in keeping the memory of its dead leaders alive. And why? The next clause gives the answer: "Who have spoken unto you the Word of God." Οἰτινες is descriptive and causal, seeing that they, inasmuch as they, have spoken the Word of God. The punctiliar aorist sums up their whole life's activity in this one term. Here is the first characteristic of leaders worthy of the name — they speak the Word of God. They proclaim, not their own word, they do not seek to force their own will upon the congregation; they do not resort to church politics and questionable means in order to gain their point; they do not advocate man-made schemes for the growth and expansion of the congregation or Church irrespective of their agreement with God's Word; they do not take their cue from modern psychologists and scientists and doctors of divinity that run rough-shod over the teachings of the Bible; they do not regard the preaching of the Word of God as outmoded, as unsuited to present needs and conditions. Also in their leadership they continue in the Word of Christ, John 8:31, warring not after the flesh, etc., 2 Cor. 10:3-5. They speak the Word in season and out of season, 2 Tim. 4:2; speak God's unalterable Law and speak God's unchanging Gospel as both are recorded in the written Word, without adding thereto or taking away from them or changing them in the least detail. Such men are leaders, leaders not only throughout their lifetime, but leaders whose influence extends beyond the grave. The writer uses the present participle, leading ones, whose leadership continues though their lips are silenced in death. Men that speak the Word of God, be they pastors or laymen, are true

leaders in whatever sphere the Lord may have placed them. They are the representatives, the mouthpieces, of God, through whom God speaks and leads and rules His Church as He wants it to be led and ruled. Such leaders are not to be forgotten; their memory is to be held sacred.

The author goes on to tell his readers in what manner they are to remember their leaders. "Whose faith follow," imitate. The faith, the saving, living faith, as shown in the life of the leaders, their firm trust in the Savior, is to serve as a pattern for the faith of all that heard them. Here is another characteristic of all true leaders in the Church, faith, implicit trust in the promises of the Gospel, that joyous assurance to which Paul, the great leader, gives utterance in Rom. 8 and Gal. 2:16-21; and Peter, Matt. 16:16; John 6:68, 69; and John, 1 John 1:1 ff.; 5:1-20. This faith, life-giving, life-changing, was the theme of all their preaching; this faith their hearers must follow in order properly to remember their leaders.

"Considering the end of their conversation." Consider, ἀναθεωρέω, occurs again only Acts 17:23. θεωρέω is used of careful inspection by one who is interested in the matter and therefore closely observes every detail. Ἀνά denotes repetition, inspecting over and over again; it is also used in the sense of upward, as Winer puts it, to survey a series of objects, looking from the lowest to the highest. In either case the word denotes careful, interested, continued observation. The Christians are to observe the end of their leaders' conversation, their walk of life. Again the meaning of the term used for end, ἔκβασις, and its peculiar force will become clearer to us by referring to the Septuagint. In Wisdom 2 the author speaks of wicked men, dissatisfied with their own life and jealous of the happiness of the godly man. In order to ascertain whether the godly man's conduct in walking out of life, v. 17, will agree with his boastful words while walking in life, vv. 13-16, they determine to afflict him with "despitefulness and torture" and "condemn him with a shameful death," vv. 19, 20, in order to prove what shall happen in the end, ἔκβασις, of him, v. 17. So the Christians should carefully observe the end of their leaders' conversation, keep their eyes and hearts and minds fixed on the manner in which their leaders faced death, which for some of them may have been a death exactly such as the wicked men of Wisdom 2 had planned for the righteous man. That is a third characteristic of the true leaders, the courageous facing of the last enemy, death, no matter in which manner it may come to them, as a martyr's death, as a slow, lingering, painful passing out of life, or as a sudden summons to eternity. In speaking of death, in preparing for death, in meeting death, they must be examples to their hearers, true leaders in the battle against this prince of terrors. So Stephen died, Acts

7:54-60. So Paul faced death, Phil. 1:21-23; 2 Tim. 4:6-8, 18; so Peter, 2 Pet. 1:10-19. Closely observing this manner of going out of life, they should follow the faith of their leaders, which also enabled them to meet death as they did, and only by following this faith would their own going out of life be like unto that of their leaders.

Note that not the mistakes and errors of the leaders are to be remembered. They are forgiven by God, who remembers them no more, Jer. 31:34; Heb. 8:12; 10:17. As children of God the members of the Christian congregation should forgive and forget and no longer remember the sins and shortcomings and weaknesses of their leaders. They should remember their preaching of the Word, their faith, their manner of meeting death, the three particulars in which they were really leaders. May God give such leaders to His Church, and may Christian congregations at all times remember such faithful leaders!

Jesus Christ the same yesterday and today and forever, v. 8. While their human leaders come and go, there is one who never changes, their own Jesus Christ, the God-anointed Savior. He is, as the writer puts it, yesterday and today the same and forever, unto the ages. We fail to see any reason why "yesterday" should be restricted to the time "when He first was preached to the readers" or to the time of the Old Testament, as some commentators assert. The phrase "yesterday, today, and forever" is simply an "exhaustive unfolding of the notion αἰεί," (Luenemann in *Meyer's Commentary*), covering past, present, and future. Αὐτός designates Christ as the Unchangeable One, the only one who is far removed from change and death and decay, infinitely above all that is called time. Already in chap. 1:10-12 the writer had quoted Ps. 102 as a Messianic psalm, describing the eternal unchangeableness of Him who, after He had by Himself purged our sins, had sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, 1:3, and who always, ever, is and remains the God-anointed Savior, Jesus Christ. *Jesus Christ the same yesterday.* As such He had been preached to these Hebrew Christians by their first leaders and had been accepted by them in joyous faith. As such He had proved Himself throughout His life on earth. His incarnation, His lowly birth, His life in the form of a servant, His suffering and death, His glorious resurrection and ascension on high, all proclaim Him the Savior sent of God, the Lord's Christ, Luke 2:26; the Salvation prepared before all people, Luke 2:30-32. The same Jesus Christ is found in the Old Testament. Of Him did all the prophets bear witness, Luke 24:44-48; Acts 10:43. To Him did all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant point forward, as the writer had so authoritatively and conclusively pointed out in his letter. No sooner had sin entered into

the world than Christ Jesus was promised, and faith in this Savior was the only way to salvation, Heb. 7-11. Whosoever name was written in the Book of Life was written there because of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Jesus Christ, yesterday, Rev. 13:8. This Lamb, the eternal Wisdom of God, could say: Prov. 8:22-31. From eternity the Son of God was Jesus Christ, the God-anointed Savior, Luke 22:22; Acts 2:23; 4:28. He is the same *today*. As long as it is today, as long as today's present dawns upon yesterday's past, so long He is Jesus the Christ, our Prophet, Priest, and King, gathering His own by the preaching of His Word, forgiving their sins on the basis of His vicarious atonement, ruling His Kingdom of Grace and Mercy, spreading it in spite of all opposition, defending it against all the gates of hell, comforting, strengthening, preserving them that are His, leading them from victory to victory. The same forever, εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. The first time this expression occurs in the New Testament there is no room for doubt as to its significance. Luke 1:33 it is used in parallelism with "no end." It denotes endless duration, eternity. In eternity, throughout all ages and eons, Jesus Christ remains the *same*. He whose years shall have no end, Ps. 192:27, shall never grow old and feeble, shall never fail. As His words shall not pass away, Luke 21:33, so He Himself shall endure, though earth and heaven pass away. In eternity He will be the Bridegroom of the bride, the Church of the elect, Rev. 21:9, the bright and Morning Star of the heavenly Jerusalem, Rev. 22:16; its Light, its Temple, 21:22, 23; the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, 22:13, the One and All of eternal bliss. The *Bible Commentary* makes the following observation: "Thus the last chapter resumes, and applies practically, the testimony to Christ which had been given in the first, Thou art the same." Jesus Christ the same forever and ever. May we be as changeless in our affection and loyalty to Him! We can prove our loyalty by heeding the exhortation of the next verse.

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein, v. 9. The author speaks of divers and strange doctrines. Divers, ποικίλος, originally many-colored, variegated, then various, of different, divers sorts, Matt. 4:24; Jas. 1:2. Various sorts of doctrines have harassed the Christians at all times, varying as to the particular point of departure from the truth; differing in the presentation of, and argumentation for, the error; changing the phraseology as circumstances demanded. But all these varying doctrines are *strange* doctrines, foreigners, aliens, in the realm of divine truth, without right of citizenship in the kingdom of Him

whose doctrine is one and unalterable, as He Himself is the One and Unchangeable. Christ's kingdom is not a democracy in the sense that the citizens form the supreme authority and are vested with power to change the laws and teachings governing their commonwealth. Christ's kingdom is an autocracy, in which He alone rules, He alone has the right to decide which doctrines are to be taught and tolerated. He has laid down these teachings in His holy Word, and only if we continue in His Word, can we lay claim to being His disciples indeed. Christ has not given each successive age the liberty to reinterpret the Scriptures for themselves in the light of the advancement in science and biology and psychology and other ologies. It is His will that His Church adhere to His Word, teach it exactly as He has delivered it to man in Holy Scripture. Any change, any alteration, of His Word is in fact a *crimen laesae maiestatis* and should be so regarded by His followers. Yet, at all times men within and without the Church have claimed the right to teach as they please, to change, to alter, the truth laid down in the Bible. Also the readers of this letter were being disturbed by false teachings arising within their own midst or coming to them from without, and therefore their leader regards it as his duty to raise his voice in warning against the danger threatening them.

Be not carried about. The Authorized Version follows the less authenticated reading of the Receptus, *περιφέρεσθε*, while by far the most manuscripts offer *παραφέρεσθε*, to carry away, to be led aside from the right course. This term is used by our Savior in His prayer that the cup be removed from Him, Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42. Jude 12 it is used of the clouds carried away by the winds, in classical Greek of objects swept away by the force of wind-storms and floods. In Heb. 2:1 the result of being swept away from the right course is expressed by "let them slip," literally, lest we drift past them. It is a dangerous matter to drift about in matters of doctrine, to be swayed and carried about with every wind of doctrine, Eph. 4:14. The result, as expressed in our text, will be that one is carried *away* from the truth, past the goal toward which Christians are headed, carried to eternal destruction. The writer purposely uses the strong term "carried away" to show the insidious nature of false doctrines. Wind and water seem innocent enough, harmless, even beneficial, cooling, refreshing; yet what destruction, what havoc, can they create! False doctrines may seem harmless, they may seem plausible to our reason, pleasant to the flesh; yet they will carry one away from the truth, once one surrenders to them.

The writer motivates his warning against vacillation. Firmness, and firmness alone, is a *good thing*. *Καλόν* denotes that which

is good in its nature and adapted to its purpose. In a brief sentence the writer connects a number of important thoughts: one, that the heart be established, made firm and sure; another, that the establishment of the heart is effected by grace, χάριτι being emphatically placed at the beginning. A third thought is that the heart is to be established, τὴν καρδίαν emphatically at the end. A fourth thought is added in the final clause. Only grace, neither meats nor divers doctrines, can establish the heart. These four thoughts deserve careful study.

Christians are to be established, made firm, rendered immovable, firmly rooted in the foundation on which they are built. The author would not subscribe to the canon of the Tridentinum which places the anathema on the doctrine that a Christian should be certain of his salvation. He is not a defender of what Luther calls the *monstrum incertitudinis*, the monster of uncertainty. Like Paul he regards certainty, assurance, as the good and proper and profitable state of mind of a Christian. Cp. Rom. 8:31-39; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Tim. 1:12.

The *heart* is to be established. This word in New Testament usage denotes the entire soul-life, comprising intellect, emotion, and will. The heart knows and understands, e. g., Matt. 13:15; Luke 2:19, 51; 2 Cor. 4:6; Eph. 1:18. The heart is the seat of emotions and feelings, John 16:6, 22; Rom. 1:24. The heart wills, Acts 5:4; 11:23; Rom. 2:5. Christian intellect, Christian emotions, Christian will, the entire spiritual life of a Christian, must be firm and established. The normal Christian must *know* the truth; his intellect is to grasp firmly the doctrines proposed in Holy Writ, so that he can distinguish between truth and error, defend the truth and refute every error. No one that has not intellectually grasped the truth can possibly follow the admonition, in v. 9 a and similar exhortations. Ignorance of facts is what makes error possible, and ignorance of the facts of Christian doctrine makes the Christian an easy victim of any error or errorist. Therefore it is a good and profitable thing that the Christian's knowledge, his intellectual understanding of the teachings of Scripture, be made firm, be established. The term *heart* comprises more than mere intellectual knowledge; it includes emotion, feeling; it involves an attitude with regard to the knowledge one has acquired. The doctrines assimilated by the intellect must not be stored in the mind as dead, cold facts; they are to rouse our interest and attention; they are to be objects of our trust and reliance and confidence, truths on which we base our hope of life, to which we are bound with a thousand ties of love and affection, which are a matter of life and death to us, for which we would gladly lay down our lives rather than renounce or deny them. Finally, in order that our heart be

established, these teachings must, and by their very nature will, affect our will, rouse us to determined action, make us zealous in good works, Titus 2:14; cause us to let our light shine before the people, Matt. 5:16; 1 Pet. 2:11 ff.; make us active, energetic, untiring workers in the kingdom of our Lord.

To be established in this knowledge, in this love, in this activity, is indeed a good thing, adapted to its purpose. A house built on sand will not stand, Matt. 7:26, 27. A Christian who is not firmly established in the knowledge of Christ's doctrine, who will not make this doctrine his one and only hope of salvation, who does not love every detail of the Word and teaching of His Savior, who is not willing to make every sacrifice in the spreading of this Word, a Christian, in brief, to whom doctrine is a matter of indifference, such a Christian is helpless against the flood of error and falsehood sweeping over the world. Only thorough knowledge of the doctrines of Christ, combined with a childlike trust in them, an affectionate love of them, and a fervent zeal for them, will make us safe against the divers and strange doctrines of errorists. Such firmness cannot be attained in a moment. The writer purposely uses the present infinitive, expressing durative action. It is a matter of continuous exertion of our spiritual powers, of constant increase in knowledge by studying the Word, of steady growth in humble, yet trusting faith, of continually furnishing the fire of our love with fresh fuel from the inexhaustible storehouse of Holy Writ, of never permitting our zeal for holiness and sanctification of life to grow cold and sluggish.

Establishment of the heart cannot be effected by divers and strange doctrines. Their very nature precludes this possibility. They are of varying sorts, one denying what the other affirms or prohibiting what another permits or commands. Once leave the firm foundation of truth revealed in the Bible, and we are hopelessly adrift on the sea of human opinions, theories, and speculations. They are *strange*, they have no right of existence in the kingdom of God. They are alien, antagonistic, to the true doctrine. They teach a doctrine which is not the Gospel of God. How can they make the heart of man firm in matters which God alone can decide, in matters pertaining to man's eternal salvation? Establishment of the heart can be effected only by the truth.

The writer, however, does not use the word "truth" or "true doctrine." Instead he singles out that truth which is the very heart and center of Christianity, the truth which he had so clearly and beautifully presented to his readers, the doctrine of the grace of God in Christ Jesus. This grace which speaks to man of forgiveness, life, and salvation through the vicarious offering of the great High Priest is indeed a good thing, is well adapted to

establish the heart of man. Cp. the firm assurance of Paul expressed in such passages as Rom. 5:1 ff.; 8:31 ff. Grace certainly gives divine assurance of one's salvation. This grace, the doctrine that we are justified by grace, through faith, without works, also enables us to take a firm stand against all divers and strange doctrines, to be sure that we have the truth as long as we adhere to the Scriptures. This doctrine of grace cannot be of human origin. It is a mystery that has never entered the heart of man, 1 Cor. 2:7-9. And therefore the Book in which this divine mystery is revealed to us cannot be of human origin. It cannot have been conceived by the heart of man. It must be the Word of Him who already in eternity planned salvation by grace, the Word which is truth, infallible truth, reliable in its every statement, the irrefragable Word of the God of Truth, John 10:35. Basing our faith on this Book, which speaks to us of God's grace, accepting its teachings, which have been penned by inspiration of God, we can be sure that we have the truth; for we are merely repeating what God has told us in His holy Word, which is truth, John 17:17.

As the writer had singled out one of the truths revealed by God, so he singles out a human doctrine, in which both the diversity and strangeness of error became especially manifest, the doctrine concerning *meats*. Βρώματα here as in Heb. 9:10 refers to clean and unclean meats, concerning which there was such a diversity of opinion among the Jewish teachers, all of which endangered saving faith, Col. 2:16-23. The readers evidently were in danger of again regarding the distinction between clean and unclean meats as divinely commanded, as necessary for, or at least helpful towards, gaining assurance of eternal salvation. The writer assures them that meats, the kinds of food one eats, are of no value whatsoever in establishing the heart. *They have not profited them that have been occupied with them.* We have adopted this translation rather than one preferred by some interpreters, "in which they were not benefited which walked about." Not once in the New Testament is the word περιπατεῖν used absolutely. Invariably a word or phrase is added more closely defining the manner of walk. The writer uses the aorist participle. Their whole lifetime is summed up in this one word, "which have not profited." Again the aorist is used. The writer passes judgment on their efforts to obtain salvation, assurance, peace of conscience, by eating only kosher meats. Every one of them unprofitable, useless, vanity of vanities. Nor were these laws governing meats ever intended to give such assurance, as this letter had so clearly set forth, chap. 9:10; cp. Col. 2:8-23. And meats are but one particular item in that long list of works which men have chosen in a vain effort to assure themselves of God's favor and good will, to gain peace for their troubled hearts and minds. Grace alone can establish the heart, not grace plus

human efforts, not grace after man has tried his best, or grace helping man to do his part, but grace alone, exclusive of works, which would only nullify grace, Rom. 11:6. Pelagianism, Semi-Pelagianism, synergism, Latermannism, are so many divers, varicolored doctrines, each one of a color different from that of grace, each one a different shade of tattle-tale gray, branding it at once to the observant Christian as a doctrine differing essentially from the divinely pure white garment of grace, presented to all sinners by the High Priest in His holy Word. The gray will not bring us to heaven. The gray cannot make us sure. The gray is defilement, filth, which must be removed by the grace of God, washing it in the blood of Jesus. Why seek that which cannot establish the heart? Why turn the back on that grace which alone can give peace and comfort and assurance divine? Cling to your Bible! Adhere to God's truth! Abide and grow in grace!

The standard Epistle for this Sunday speaks of the fellowship in the Gospel and exhorts the Christians to manifest this fellowship in their lives. The Eisenach Epistle-lesson also speaks of that communion of saints that has been gathered round the Gospel by the great High Priest and exhorts the readers to remain loyal to their brethren and the Captain of their salvation. One may sum up the entire epistle in the exhortation: *Remain Loyal to Jesus Christ and His Congregation. Dedicate Your Life to Him*, vv. 1-6. *Venerate His Word*, vv. 7, 9. (Flee false doctrine, remember the preachers of His Word who told you of the unchanging Christ and His grace.—*It Is a Good Thing that the Heart be Established*. What does this mean? (See remarks on v. 9b.) How is this manifested? Vv. 1-6. How may we obtain it? Vv. 7-9. (By grace, through faith in the unchanging Christ; by avoiding divers doctrines.)—*The Importance of Avoiding False Doctrines*. For our life, vv. 1-6. For our faith, vv. 7-9.—*Be Faithful to the End*. Jesus Christ is the same, v. 8. His will never changes, vv. 1-6. His grace alone establishes the heart, vv. 7-9.—*Jesus Christ the Same Yesterday and Today and Forever*. In His work. (Always the anointed Savior, v. 8.) In His will, vv. 1-6. (He demands the same, no more, no less; His threats, v. 4, His promises, vv. 5, 6, remain the same. Therefore obey Him.) In His grace, vv. 7-9; therefore be not carried away by divers doctrines.—Lenski offers the following: *It Is a Good Thing to Be a Member of the True [Visible] Church*. There God's Word is properly taught and error exposed. There clean morals are inculcated, and all vice is rebuked. There loving brethren give us their sympathy and extend their help. There faithful pastors give us their service and leave us their noble example. (*Eisenach Epistle Selections*, p. 310.) **TH. LAETSCH**