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Sermon Study on Heb. 10:19-25

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Pictures of Peter go back so far at this time that several experts believe we have an authentic portrait of the apostle, just as we seem to possess a genuine portrait of Paul.

The possibilities of systematic study in this field are practically limitless, and they reach into every department of theological information, exegesis, doctrinal theology, liturgics, art, and scores of related fields. How interesting to find a Roman Catholic writer stating, for example, that the early Church knew no difference between the vestments of the laity and the clergy: "Liturgical garments were . . . originally nothing more than the good street clothes of the cultured gentleman but in the change of style gradually ceased to serve the ordinary way of living and were then, due to the conservative character of the Church, reserved for the liturgical use." (Kaufmann, *op. cit.*, 565.) One is fascinated also by the very interesting discussions of the sacred vessels as used in the early Church. The chalice of Antioch, for example, has been the topic, not only of articles in professional magazines, but even of entire books, and the experts have not yet fully agreed as to its date, some of them insisting on placing it at the end of the first century, whereas others, like Kaufmann, would not make the date earlier than the end of the second century.

But no matter which part of the field we investigate, we are bound to find information of particular importance, not only *per se* but with many possibilities for practical applications. In fact, history must be backed up by archeology and go hand in hand with it; otherwise its data will often prove inadequate and misleading. Biblical and Christian archeology should occupy a definite place in the study program of every pastor.

P. E. KRETZMANN

Sermon Study on Heb. 10:19—25

Eisenach Epistle Selection for New Year's Day

The lesson for New Year's Day consists of one long sentence made up of three exhortatory subjunctive clauses, introduced by a participle clause. In the introductory clause, vv. 19-21, the writer sums up in two statements the contents of the preceding chapters. We have the assurance of a trustworthy entrance to the sanctuary, and we have a great High Priest. On these two facts he bases a threefold admonition, to continue steadfast in faith (22) and in hope (23) and in love (24, 25). The pastor preaching on this text will do well to read the entire letter, for one cannot fully understand this passage without a knowledge of the preceding dissertation.

Having, therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, v. 19. "Brethren." This word serves a double purpose. It is a *captatio benevolentiae* in the noblest sense of the term. The writer addresses his readers, young and old, strong and weak, as brethren. He is not speaking to them as a stern judge nor as a carping critic but as a brother who like them is human, like them a sinner, imperfect, yet like them has found the assurance of the forgiveness of all his sins through the blood of the great High Priest. At the same time the position of this word serves to emphasize the word *παρρησία*, boldness. This term originally means "telling all," speaking one's whole mind. Such unreserved speech implies utmost confidence in Him to whom we lay bare the inmost secrets of our hearts. Hence the word has acquired the sense of free and fearless confidence, cheerful assurance, that boldness which without hesitancy, without doubt, goes about its business, joyfully sure of success. Such confidence we are "having." The present participle expresses linear, durative action. We have in our possession, we are holding it as our own. The manner of coming into possession of this boldness has been shown in previous chapters, by the Word spoken to us by the Son, 1:1, and by the messengers of Christ, 2:1-4, which Word is quick and powerful, 4:12.

We have boldness "to enter into the holiest." Instead of the verbal construction of the Authorized Version, the writer uses the noun. *Εἰσοδος* may mean the act of entering or the way of entrance. Here only the objective entrance can be meant. The phrase *παρρησία εἰς* is in the New Testament invariably used of the foundation toward which the confidence is directed, never of confidence impelling one to do something, where the infinitive of the thing to be done is used. Cp. Philem. 8. Again, the Christian's confidence is not based on his own act of entering into heaven. That would be a very uncertain foundation. Cp. Mark 9:24. Finally, whenever the place into which one enters is specified, it is designated by *εἰς* (cp. 2 Pet. 1:11) or *πρός*, 1 Thess. 1:9; 2:1. In Acts 13:24 no place is mentioned. In our passage, the only remaining one in which this word is used, it is connected with the genitive, indicating that here the writer has in mind an entrance pertaining to, belonging to, the Holiest, the very same entrance or way called *ὁδός* in the verse immediately following and which had been called the way into the Holiest, 9:8. In other words, the writer speaks here of a way whereby one can enter the Holiest. The word *ἅγια*, the holy things, here designates, as in chap. 9:8, 12, the Most Holy Place, the *Kodesh Hakkodashim* of Ex. 26:33, 34, etc., the *Hakkodesh* of Lev. 16:2, 3, 16, 17, etc., the place "within the veil," Lev. 16:12, 15. There dwelt the Lord above

the cherubim, Ex. 30:6, above the Ark of the Covenant, in which were placed the tables of the Law, symbolizing the justice of the living Judge of all the earth, and which was covered with the mercy-seat, the symbol of the grace of the unchanging God of eternity. There was God's throne of grace and mercy. There was a way to this throne. Yet the throne was hidden from public view by a heavy veil, and the way through the veil was forbidden on pain of death to every Israelite and every stranger, Num. 1:51; 3:10, 38; 18:3, 5, 22. Only on one day was the High Priest permitted to enter, Lev. 16:13. That entrance to God's throne was a way that could never fill the heart of an Israelite with joyous assurance and confidence. It must instil dread fear and hopeless despair of ever being able to approach the mercy-seat of God by this way. All this has been changed "by the blood of Jesus." Compare what the writer has just told his readers, 9:1 to 10:18. By this blood, cleansing us from all sin and accepted by us in true faith, we have an approach to God. No longer is the way to the tree of life a forbidden way. No longer is the entrance to Paradise barred by cherubim and a sword of flame and fire. Every barrier is broken down; every prohibition has been abolished. The way is open; admission is free. "By the blood of Jesus." 'Εν, by means, because of this blood, we are in possession of joyous confidence in this entrance, or, as others translate it, we have a joyous confidence in the entrance by means of the blood of Jesus. The sense is not materially changed if we connect the last phrase with *entrance* or with *boldness*.

By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, v. 20. The apostle goes on to explain why we have joyous confidence in this gateway to heaven. It is so safe and sure a way, and it is open to all. A literal translation would read: which (entrance) He has initiated for us as a way, newly made and living, through the veil, that is, (through) His flesh. Needless to say, the "which" can refer only to *entrance*, not to *confidence*. Christ did not initiate confidence in the entrance as the way to God. He is not an example of faith in His blood. He has initiated a new way for us through His flesh. 'Ενκαινίζω means to innovate, not merely to renew, or repair, something that has formerly existed but to introduce something altogether new. The use of this word already points out that Jesus inaugurated something that had never before existed; dedicated (in this sense the word is used quite frequently in the LXX; cp. Deut. 20:5; 1 Kings 8:63, etc.), consecrated, a way altogether novel. Cp. also Heb. 9:18. This fact is brought out still more forcibly by the adjective "new." Πρῶσφατος; means newly slain, freshly killed. It is hardly probable, however, that the etymology

determined the choice of this word. The idea of a newly slain way is incongruous, to say the least, and the word has lost so completely its original meaning that it is used of a newly acquired friend, Ecclus. 9:10; strange gods, Deut. 32:17; something that did not exist or occur before, Eccl. 1:9. The idea of novelty already expressed in the verb is emphasized. It was a way not only unknown, undiscovered, unheard of (cp. 1 Cor. 2:9); it was a way non-existent before its innovation by Christ. Though new, it is an efficient, a "living" way. Says Delitzsch in his commentary: "The way into the Sanctuary of the Old Testament was simply a lifeless pavement trodden by the high priest, and by him alone; the way opened by Jesus Christ is one that really leads and carries all who enter it into the heavenly rest." We may add, the Old Testament way was a way of death to all that ventured to walk on it. The New Testament way to the sanctuary of heaven is one which has life in itself and imparts this life to those who walk on it, makes them living stones in the house of God, 1 Pet. 2:5. It is a way which never wearies those that travel on it, from which ever new life and ever fresh vigor flows up into the pilgrims, so that they daily experience the truth of that remarkable promise Is. 40:30, 31. This way is as living and everlasting as the Lord God Himself and will lead all who walk on it safely and surely to everlasting life, Is. 35:8-10.

This way is further described, and at the same time proved to be a new and living way, by the words "through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." The writer does not speak of the rending, or the removal, of the veil (cp. Matt. 27:51) as if "the weak, limit-bound, and mortal $\sigma\acute{\alpha}\rho\kappa\acute{\iota}$ (5:7) which He had assumed for our sakes hung like a curtain between Him and the divine sanctuary into which He would enter; and in order to [effect] such entrance, this curtain had to be withdrawn by death," Delitzsch, *Commentary on Hebrews* (publ. by T. & T. Clark), II, p. 172; *Expositor's Greek Testament*; and others. The writer is not speaking here of the way by which Jesus entered into the Sanctuary, but of the way He prepared "for us," that new and living way, consecrated for our benefit, that we may walk in it. Note the emphatic position of $\eta\mu\acute{\iota}\nu$ in the original. The way to heaven, innovated by Christ, is for all. There is no distinction of order or rank or race or nationality. There is not a soul living on the face of the earth for whom this way has not been prepared, whom this way will not bring straight to heaven. But this way also leads like that to the Old Testament Sanctuary "through the veil." Cp. Lev. 4:16, 17, where "before the veil" and "before the Lord" are used side by side. Cp. also Ex. 26:31-34; Lev. 16:2. There was no other entrance. So the entrance to heaven, symbolized by the Most Holy

Place, leads through the flesh of Christ, symbolized by the veil in the Tabernacle. The term σάρξ occurs six times in our letter, the adjective σαρκινός once, and invariably the weakness of the flesh is stressed. So, when it refers to human flesh as compared with the endless life, 7:16 (adjective); with conscience, 9:10,13; with spirits, 12:9. It is used of Christ, 5:7: "in the days of His flesh," His weakness, His humiliation. Heb. 2:14 we are told that the children are partakers of flesh and blood, and so He likewise took part of the same, of that flesh which was in every respect, excepting sin, like that of the children of man, weak, feeble, subject to suffering, agonies, death, the torments of hell. Cp. 2:17,18; 4:15 to 5:2, 7-10; also Rom. 8:3. The first chapter of our letter very clearly brought out the necessity of Christ's appearing in the flesh, not only becoming a man, but taking part in the weakness of human nature in order to prepare the way to life for sinful mankind. Cp. "it became," 2:9,10; "it behooved," it was necessary, 2:17; also 9:11-22, on the necessity of Christ's suffering and death. Not merely His incarnation was sufficient to prepare the way for us. He was not merely to be a *teacher* sent by God to teach us a way to life, neither to give an example of holy living. He had to suffer and die in the stead of man and therefore He had to assume the weakness of our flesh, though not its sinfulness, in order to consecrate for us the way to heaven. All this is summed up in the brief word "flesh." That is the only way to heaven for sinful mankind, a novel way, yet a living, efficacious way, a way on which we may base our faith in fullest confidence and joyous assurance that it will bring us to the goal.

And having an High Priest over the house of God, v. 21. "Having" is to be supplied from v. 19. We have in our possession not only the living way to heaven but, in addition to that, a "High Priest." The expression used here is peculiar, ἱερεῖα μέγαν. The usual term for high priest in our epistle is ἀρχιερεὺς. Chap. 4:14 He is called "the great High Priest," ἀρχιερεὺς μέγας, and therefore we hold that in our passage we should translate rather a "great Priest" or "great High Priest," especially since in the Old Testament the high priest is frequently simply designated as "the priest." The author does not merely say that we have a high priest, hence are equal to the Jews. We have a high priest who may be called a great Priest, far excelling the high priest of the Old Testament. This was the truth brought out chap. 4:14 to 10:18, and the greatness of this High Priest is emphasized in the next phrase, "over the house of God." Ὁ οἶκος τοῦ θεοῦ is the common expression for the Tabernacle, Matt. 12:4; the Temple, Matt. 21:13. Here it designates the spiritual house of God, that house in which the saints above and the saints below but one communion make. Cp. Eph.

3:14, 15; Heb. 12:22-24. The term comprises both His Church on earth, Heb. 3:6; Eph. 2:19-22, and His Church in heaven, Rev. 21:3. The High Priest is "over" this house. 'Επί here means over, above, not in the sense of being far removed both in space and interest but in the sense of direction toward. Though Christ is exalted infinitely above all things in heaven and on earth, Eph. 1:20-23, yet His interest is directed toward His own. It embraces not only the saints made perfect; no, His sympathetic heart and never-ending patience and solicitude go out toward His brethren still on earth, Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15; 5:1, 2; His omnipotent mercy and loving-kindness defends them against all attacks of their enemies and strengthens and preserves them steadfast in His Word and faith until they have arrived at the final goal of that new and living way on which their feet have been placed by their loving High Priest.

Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water, v. 22. "Let us draw near," προσερχόμεθα. The LXX uses this word in translating the Hebrew כָּרַב in the Levitical legislation, where it has the special liturgical sense of drawing near to God for the purpose of worship or of obtaining grace and forgiveness. Cp. Lev. 9:5, 7, 8; 21:17, 18, 21, 23, etc. The writer is not speaking of our first approach to God in conversion, when, aliens from the house of God, Eph. 2:19, we were by the almighty grace of God turned from the way of sin and approached the throne of God, asking for, and obtaining, forgiveness and pardon. He is speaking in the first person, including himself, who is certainly not a stranger in the house of God. He is speaking to brethren, v. 19, converted sinners, who were, however, in danger of straying away from the Father's home. Hence the present imperative is durative: let us keep on approaching. He is exhorting them to make continued use of the way to God's throne of mercy inaugurated by their great High Priest. Of what benefit is this new and living way if we do not make use of it? If we have confidence in this way, why do we not show our confidence by walking on it? How can we ever hope to approach God if we do not walk on the only way, come to Him by the only entrance, through the veil, His flesh? Why leave the great High Priest, who leads you straight to the house and heart of God, and go back to the former Covenant, decayed, waxed old, vanished away, chap. 8:13, ever since the great High Priest fulfilled its shadows and opened the only way to the sanctuary on high? Let us approach Him daily, hourly. Let us confess all our sins and shortcomings, all our failings and transgressions, to Him who was in all respects tempted like as we are, yet without sin, 4:15. Let us whisper all

our heartaches and secret sorrows into the ear of our sympathetic High Priest, sitting on the throne of mercy, 4:15 to 5:2. Let us share our joys and sorrows with Him who is not ashamed to call us brethren, 2:11. Let us go to the Captain of salvation for strength in our battle against our enemies, 12:1-4, 12 ff., and in the hour of death let us commit body and soul to Him that can save to the uttermost, 7:25, and who will on that Day come unto our salvation, 9:28.

This daily approach to the throne of God is the best antidote against doubt and apostasy. When Nathanael asked: John 1:46, Philip told him: "Come and see." Yes, come and see! Approach God on the way prepared by Jesus, and you will see that it is a living way indeed; you will experience such sweet hours of communion with God, such comfort, such revival of your drooping spirit, such heavenly joys, that the thought of leaving your High Priest will become inconceivable to you. In response to His question, John 6:67, you will joyously respond: vv. 68, 69.

"With a true heart." Ἀληθινῆ expresses that which is all it professes to be. On the meaning of *heart* cp. the October issue, p. 764. All the faculties of our heart and soul are to be at His service, dedicated and consecrated to Him alone, without pretense, without selfishness, in genuine, true faith and love.

"In full assurance of faith." The verb πληροφοροῦν means to bear or bring the full measure of something. The noun expresses the state of being filled to overflowing, so that there is room for nothing else. Both verb, e. g., Rom. 14:5; Col. 4:12, and noun 1 Thess. 1:5, have acquired the connotation of full conviction, full assurance, expressing that certainty which leaves no room for doubt or fear or hesitation; which is altogether confidence, trust, a faith which knows of no other name, Acts 4:12, which relies on this name unshaken, unwavering, though the heathen rage and the whole world crashes, Ps. 46:1-7; which is supremely satisfied in the object of its assurance, Ps. 73:23-26. Cp. Rom. 8:28-39. What a contrast to the wavering, vacillating "faith" of many of the original and of the present-day readers of this epistle. In order to encourage all to such fulness of faith, he adds two participial clauses.

"Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." Both *sprinkle* and *wash* are ceremonial terms occurring frequently in the Levitical legislation. When the Israelites were to be received into the covenant, they were sprinkled with blood, whereupon their representatives were permitted to draw near to God, Ex. 24:4-11. Whenever an Israelite had become unclean, he was to wash before again being permitted to appear before God, Lev. 14:8, 9, etc. Cp. Ex. 29:4 on the wash-

ing, and v. 21 on the sprinkling, of Aaron and his sons whereby they were made priests and permitted to enter the Sanctuary. The fact that these two terms are, like the word "draw near," liturgical terms, together with the fact that washing and sprinkling were necessary items in the ritual prescribed for the priests before they were allowed to enter the Sanctuary, is proof sufficient that both participial clauses are to be connected with "draw near," and must neither be connected with v. 23 nor separated, the first connected with v. 22, the second with v. 23. In the Old Testament the body was sprinkled, symbolizing the inward sprinkling to be effected by the blood of Jesus, Heb. 9:12-15; 12:24. The New Testament sprinkling makes us not only ceremonially clean, as the Israelite was after being sprinkled a member of the visible congregation of Israel and the priest was, after being sprinkled, permitted to function in the sacerdotal office, irrespective of their inner relation to God. Christians have received a better sprinkling, a sprinkling of the heart, of their inner life, a sprinkling "from an evil conscience." Having been sprinkled through Word and Sacrament by the blood of Jesus, their conscience has been cleansed from sin; its accusing voice has been silenced. In its stead a good conscience, void of guilt, has been created, a conscience unafraid of God and His holiness, a conscience that will no longer cause them to hide before God in fear and shame, Gen. 3:8-10, a conscience that will gladly draw near to this God, in full assurance of faith, Rom. 8:1. Shall Christians, having been granted this unspeakable grace, ever think of becoming disloyal to their High Priest?

"Our bodies washed with pure water." In Num. 5:17 the "bitter water that causeth the curse," v. 18, is called holy water, מֵיִם קֹדְשִׁים, translated ὕδωρ καθαρὸν in the Septuagint. God's Word and command sanctified this water and endowed it with its strange power. So the Word of God, His command and promise, cleanses the water of Baptism, no matter how impure it may be chemically, sanctifies it, makes it holy, pure water, and endows it with a power far transcending that of natural water or of the ceremonial waters of the Old Covenant. While the water of Baptism is also applied to the body, yet it cleanses not from the filth of the flesh, 1 Pet. 3:21, nor from ceremonial uncleanness, but from sin, which contaminates not only the soul, but the body as well. The body is the seat of the heart, that deceitful thing and desperately wicked, Jer. 17:9; Gen. 8:21; Matt. 15:19. Through the members of the body the soul expresses its life, so that the body is by nature the servant of uncleanness and iniquity, Rom. 6:19. As the heart has been sprinkled, so the body has been washed with the pure water of Baptism, 1 Cor. 6:11. Together with its members, it is a member of Christ's body, 1 Cor. 6:13-20. Ought that not to

encourage us boldly to come to the throne of God? Ought Christians, so highly honored, ever consider the thought of forsaking their High Priest?

Though Baptism is administered only once, yet the cleansing effects of Baptism continue through life, Rom. 6:1 ff. Both verbs, sprinkle and wash, are in the form of perfect participles, expressing a continuing result of an action which has taken place in the past. As the blood shed by Cain attached itself to the murderer and continued to curse and condemn him, so the blood of Jesus, speaking better things than Abel, 12:24, attaches itself and still adheres to us, crying to God for mercy and speaking peace and comfort to our soul. Therefore at all times we may draw near to God's throne, and on the Last Day we can stand unashamed before His judgment-seat, for our hearts have been sprinkled, our bodies have been washed.

The writer purposely uses the *passive* perfect participle. We have not sprinkled ourselves nor washed our own bodies, as little as the Old Testament people and priests washed and sprinkled themselves. It was Moses, the mediator, that washed and sprinkled them, and it was Christ, who is our High Priest and Mediator in one person, who has sprinkled us. We have been purely passive. We could not have washed our bodies thoroughly enough nor sprinkled our hearts as perfectly as God demands. If it depended on our own efforts, we could never have that full assurance of faith necessary to draw near to God. That is possible only because the Son of God has performed this sprinkling. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith, as He alone is the Captain of our salvation. There is no reason, therefore, to hesitate and fear the approach to God. Come at all times. You have been cleansed; you are pure and holy and pleasing to God, — draw near.

Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised, v. 23. "Let us hold fast." Κατέχων means to hold back, retain, keep one from going away, Luke 4:42, hence, to hold fast, keep firmly in possession. "The profession," ὁμολογία, may denote the act of confession or the matter confessed. Here evidently the latter sense is the intended one, since "hold fast" requires an object entrusted to one. It is doubtful whether the writer had in mind a particular form of confession, a creed, though some commentators see in 1 Tim. 6:12 and other passages a reference to a confessional creed in use already in the ancient Church.

"Hold fast the confession of faith." The original has ἐλπίδος, hope, faith with regard to the future. Our Christian faith is at the same time hope. We confess Christ not only as our Redeemer who has in the past accomplished our salvation, not only as our

Priest and King who governs, guards, and preserves us during this life. We confess Christ Jesus, ever the same, 13:8, whose service does not end with death nor with the end of the world. We profess a hope that goes beyond death, beyond the grave, beyond time; that hope to which the writer has so often called the attention of his readers, 3:14 to 4:11; 6:9-20; 9:28; 11:9-16, etc. A glorious hope indeed, a hope distinctively a Christian hope. The unbeliever has no hope worthy of the name, Eph. 2:11, 12. The hope we confess is based on the work of our great High Priest, the Author in every sense of the word of our faith and hope. This is a hope worthy indeed of our unashamed confession; a hope which, just because it is a living hope, 1 Pet. 1:3, will urge us on to confess it before all the world, no matter what the consequences may be. This hope is to be unwavering, ἀκλινής. In chap. 11:34 we read that the believers of the Old Testament turned to flight, ἐκλιναν, the armies. Our profession should not be turned to flight, should not be bent back, should not retreat before the enemy's attacks, be they ever so fierce. It is to be firm and unwavering. Neither the plausible arguments of logic nor the assured deductions of philosophy, neither the ridicule of science nor the doubting questions of our own reason, should influence us to let the banner of our profession droop, to give way, if it be but an inch, to the enemy within or without. Unwavering let the profession of our hope be, Job 19:25-27; 1 Cor. 15; John 11:25, 26.

"For He is faithful that promised." The apostle adds this as a special inducement to hold fast our glorious profession. God will keep His promises, God will raise up our dead bodies and give us eternal life though we cannot understand how that is possible; for God is faithful, Num. 23:19 and 2 Cor. 1:20.

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, v. 24. "Let us consider." Κατανοέω is a stronger term than the simple verb; it means to fix one's mind upon an object, to regard intently. "To provoke one another." That is the duty of every Christian. A child of God has duties not only toward himself; cp. Phil. 2:12; 2 Pet. 1:10. Intimately connected with the care for our own soul, so as to be an essential part of it, is the consideration of our neighbor's spiritual welfare. That is a part of God's will, a phase of our Christian life, 2 Pet. 1:7, named as one of the things to be added to our faith, vv. 5-9. Nothing is more foreign to the spirit of Christianity than that selfish aloofness and cold-hearted self-consideration that asks: Gen. 4:9. We are our brother's keepers. And we are not only to admonish our brother when he has trespassed; we are to keep him from sinning; yes, we are even to be a stimulation to him unto love and good works. That is to be the purpose of our interest and regard for our fellow-

Christian, as indicated by the εἰς παροξυσμόν, "to provoke." The verb means to make sharp; the noun, occurring only here and Acts 15:39, something that sharpens, a stimulation, an incitement. Like in the English *provoke*, the action may be directed toward evil, as in Acts 15:39, or toward good, as here. The word is not used in the sense of the English *paroxysm*, denoting a periodic, violent attack, a fit, of activity, comparable to a mountain stream, which after a heavy rainfall rushes on, overflowing its banks, overwhelming everything it meets, spreading ruin and disaster, only to die down as suddenly and completely as it grew into a raging stream and leaving only a dry and waterless bed in its wake. Such periodic attacks of Christian activity usually do more harm than good. They prevent the generation of spiritual life or destroy existing sound Christian activity by their very violence just as surely as they fail to bring any one to the life in Christ or kill the enthusiasm of many a fellow-Christian by the long periods of inactivity intervening between the sporadic efforts at turning the world upside down. Not by sensational revivals, stirring up the emotions to the highest pitch and then as suddenly returning to the old lethargy and spiritual sleep, is the Church built. The Christian's life and his influence on his fellow-Christians is rather to be like the calm, steady flow of the river that went out of Eden to water the garden, itself a beautiful sight, stimulating vegetation to bring forth its best, generating beauty, fruitfulness, wherever its life-giving waters exerted their power. In like manner Christians are to provoke one another "unto love and good works," love to God and their fellow-men, that love which is the fulfilment of the Law, Rom. 13:10; Micah 6:8. This love finds expression in good works, acceptable to God and approved of men, to which Scripture exhorts in such passages as Gal. 5:22-25; Phil. 4:8, 9; Col. 3:10 to 4:6, etc.

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the Day approaching, v. 25. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." The word ἐπισυναγωγή is found only here and in 2 Thess. 2:1 and in 2 Macc. 2:7. It denotes the gathering together into one place, here the assembling of the Christian congregation for public worship. Perhaps the writer did not use the simple form συναγωγή in order to distinguish the meeting of the Christians from the synagog meetings of the Jews; but cp. Jas. 2:2. The Christians assembled daily for their meetings, in which the Word of God was preached and applied, the Sacraments administered, Acts 2:42-47, and the business of the congregation transacted, Matt. 18:17; Acts 11:22; 14:23, 27; 15:1 f., etc. The members of the congregation took a very active part in these

meetings, Acts 15:4, 5, 22; 25:30, 31; 1 Cor. 14:23-35; 1 Tim. 2:8. These meetings of the congregation are not to be "forsaken." The writer uses a very strong term, the same word used 13:5; Matt. 27:41; 2 Tim. 4:10, 16, to leave utterly and completely, desert, abandon. He uses the present participle, expressing the continued, habitual desertion. He uses neither the plural nor the singular noun without the article. They did not only make it a habit of absenting themselves occasionally from a meeting or from several meetings. They forsook τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. The article designates the meeting as an institution, an institution which is so well-known a characteristic of the Christian congregation and demanded by the very fact that they are the household of God, brethren and sisters in Christ Jesus. He warns against habitually absenting oneself from this assembling, this gathering together, of Christians. That was already the "manner," the custom, "of some." Some had given up fellowship with their brethren. Perhaps they feared persecution if they attended the meetings of the Christians; perhaps they had for some other reason lost interest in these gatherings. The writer warns them, and especially those who were in danger of adopting this custom: Let us not be habitual forsakers of the assembling of ourselves. Occasional neglect in attending the church service may readily lead to complete departure from Christian fellowship. Cp. 2 Tim. 4:10.

"Rather let us exhort one another." Παρακαλεῖν comprises much more than exhortation. It means originally to call one to one's side, the exact purpose being brought out in the context. In 1 Cor. 14:31; 1 Thess. 3:2, the ideas of exhortation and comfort and encouragement are combined. In our passage the word combines the ideas of instructing, exhorting, warning, comforting, one another. Christians ought to gather together much more frequently for the purpose of mutual edification. By word and deed, by speech and example, they ought to "call aside," personally instruct, etc., their fellow-Christians and thus incite them unto love and good works. This they are to do because they have the joyous assurance spoken of in vv. 19-21. Why should they not help others to remain faithful and diligent pilgrims on the one and only way opened to them by the blood of Jesus? Why should not love and gratitude to their great High Priest urge them to keep their brethren on the right way?

This solicitous care for the welfare of the brethren is motivated in the closing words of the epistle lesson: "so much the more as you see the Day approaching." "The Day," the final Day, the Day of Judgment, the end of the world, is in process of approaching. It may be a matter of only a few years or days or moments before the Day will come. What little time they have

should not be used in the service of sin, should not be spent in a life of estrangement from Jesus. In the same measure as the signs of Christ's second coming are being fulfilled,—and they see the Day approaching,—they should be in readiness, 2 Pet. 3:10-14; for that will be the day of their complete, everlasting redemption, Luke 21:28; Rom. 8:18. In view of this fast-approaching Day, every Christian ought to follow the admonition of the writer, v. 24, so that he, like his High Priest, may say: Heb. 2:13 b; John 17:12.

This beautiful passage is admirably chosen as the text for the first message in the Advent season, the opening Sunday of the new church-year. Like the standard Gospel-lesson it presents to the congregation *The Glorious Advent Message*. It speaks of the King who is also our High Priest, and it exhorts us to come to Him and vow faithful allegiance to Him. One may word the theme thus: *Confidently We Enter into the New Church-year with Our Great High Priest*. He is the firm Foundation of our faith. He is the never-failing Fountain of our hope. He is the perennial Well-spring of our love.—Many contracts and pacts are only temporary, ending at the close of the year. Not so God's covenant. Is. 54:5-10. *At the Portals of the New Church-year Our High Priest Greets Us*. He assures us that the way to the throne of God is still open for us, 19-22. He pleads with us to remain His loyal servants, 23-25.—God's mercy was new every morning in the old church-year, also this morning. Lam. 3:22, 23. *At the Beginning of the New Church-year let Us Pledge Anew Our Loyalty*. Let us make diligent use of the way He opened for us. Let no one rob us of the profession of our faith. Let us incite others to true discipleship (and for this purpose attend church regularly).—*Let Us Hold Fast the Profession of Our Faith*. Because then alone the way to God will remain open to us. Because then alone we shall help others to walk this way.—Were the services attended as well during the last year as they ought to have been? *In the New Church-year let Us Not Neglect Church Attendance*. In church we meet our great High Priest. Here we are encouraged to a living faith and hope. Here we can incite our brethren to love and good works.

TH. LAETSCH

Predigtentwurf für den ersten Advents Sonntag

Lut. 1, 67—80

(Thomasius-Perikopenreihe)

Ein neues Kirchenjahr! Wir denken besonders an das, was uns während der kommenden zwölf Monate im Geistlichen bevorsteht. Was ist es, Wachstum oder Rückgang in der Erkenntnis, Stärkung oder Ab-