
VI: HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS⁷

Hebrews 9: 9-10: *'By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he looked for the city which has the foundations, whose builder and maker is God.'*

The chapter from which our text is taken is pre-eminently the chapter on faith. It illustrates the nature, power and effects of this grace in a series of examples from sacred history. In the context the prophecy of Habakkuk is quoted: "The righteous shall live by faith." We remember that in the Epistle to the Romans and Galatians also the same prophecy appears with prominence. Abraham likewise there figures as the great example of faith. In consequence one might easily be led to think that the development of the idea of faith in these Epistles and in our chapter moves along identical lines. This would be only partially correct. Although the two types of teaching are in perfect accord, and touch each other at certain points, yet the angle of vision is not the same. In Romans and Galatians faith is in the main trust in the grace of God, the instrument of justification, the channel through which the vital influences flowing from Christ are received by the believer. Here in Hebrews the conception is wider; faith is "the proving of things not seen, the assurance of things hoped for." It is the organ for apprehension of unseen and future realities, giving access to and contact with another world. It is the hand stretched out through the vast distances of space and time, whereby the Christian draws to himself the things far beyond, so that they become actual to him. The earlier Epistles are not unfamiliar with this aspect of faith. Paul in II Corinthians declares that for the present the Christian walks through a land of faith and not of sight. And on the other hand this chapter is not unfamiliar with the justifying function of faith, for we are told of Noah, that he became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. Nevertheless, taking the two representations as a whole, the distinctness of the point of view in each should not be neglected. It can be best appreciated by observing that, while in these other writings Christ is the object of faith, the One towards whom the sinner's trust is directed, here the Savior is described as Himself exercising faith, in fact as the one perfect, ideal believer. The writer exhorts his readers: "Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the leader and perfecter of our faith." Faith in that other sense of specific trust, through which a guilty sinner becomes just in the sight of God, our Lord could not exercise, because He was sinless. But the faith that is an assurance of things hoped for and a proving of things not seen had a large place in his experience. By very reason of the contrast between the higher world to which He belonged and this dark lower world of suffering and death to which He had surrendered Himself it could not be otherwise than that faith, as a projection of his soul into the unseen and future, should have been the fundamental habit of the earthly life of his human nature, and should have developed in Him a degree of intensity not attained elsewhere. But, although, for the reason stated, in the unique case of Jesus the two types of faith did not go together, they by no means exclude each other in the mind of the Christian. For, after all, justifying faith is but a special application in one particular direction of the frame of mind here described. Among all the realities of the invisible world, mediated to us by the disclosures and

⁷ Geerhardus Vos, *Grace and Glory: Sermons Preached in the Chapel of Princeton Theological Seminary* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: The Reformed Press, 1922), 133-155, http://www.archive.org/stream/graceglorysermon00vosg/graceglorysermon00vosg_djvu.txt (accessed April 10, 2009).

promises of God, and to which our faith responds, there is none that more strongly calls into action this faculty for grasping the unseen than the divine pronouncement through the Gospel, that, though sinners, we are righteous in the judgment of God. That is not only the invisible, it seems the impossible; it is the paradox of all paradoxes; it requires a unique energy of believing; it is the supreme victory of faith over the apparent reality of things; it credits God with calling the things that are not as though they were; it penetrates more deeply into the deity of God than any other act of faith.

What we read in this chapter about the various activities and acts of faith in the lives of the Old Testament saints might perhaps at first create the impression, that the word faith is used in a looser sense, and that many things are attributed to it not strictly belonging there on the author's own definition. One might be inclined in more precise language to classify them with other Christian graces. There is certainly large variety of costume in the procession that is made to pass before our eyes. The understanding that the worlds were framed out of nothing, the ability to offer God an acceptable sacrifice, the experience of translation unto God, the preparing of the ark, the responsiveness to the call to leave one's country, the power to conceive seed when past age, the willingness to sacrifice an only son, Joseph's making mention beforehand of the deliverance from Egypt, and his giving commandment concerning his bones, the hiding of the child Moses, the choice by Moses, when grown up, of the reproach of God's people in preference to the treasures of Egypt, all this and more is represented as belonging to the one rubric of faith. But let us not misunderstand the writer. When he affirms that by faith all these things were suffered and done, his idea is not that what is enumerated was in each case the direct expression of faith. What he means is that in the last analysis faith alone made possible every one of the acts described, that as an underlying frame of mind it enabled all these other graces to function, and to produce the rich fruitage here set forth. The obedience, the self-sacrifice, the patience, the fortitude, of all these the exercise in the profound Christian sense would have been impossible, if the saints had not had through faith their eye firmly fixed on the unseen and promised world. Whether the call was to believe or to follow, to do or to bear, the obedience to it sprang not from any earth-fed sources but from the infinite reservoir of strength stored up in the mountain-land above.

If Moses endured it was not due to the power of resistance in his human frame, but because the weakness in him was compensated by the vision of Him who is invisible. If Abraham, who had gladly received the promises, offered up his only-begotten son, it was not because in heroic resignation he steeled himself to obedience, but because through faith he saw God as greater and stronger than the most inexorable physical law of nature : "For he accounted that God is able to raise up even from the dead." And so in all the other instances. Through faith the powers of the higher world were placed at the disposal of those whom this world threatened to overwhelm, and so the miracle resulted that from weakness they were made strong. No mistake could be greater than to naturalize the contents of this chapter, and to conceive of the thing portrayed as some instinct of idealism, some sort of sixth sense for what lies above the common plane of life, as people speak of men of vision, who see farther than the mass. The entire description rests on the basis of supernaturalism; these are annals of grace, magnalia Christi. Even the most illustrious names in the history of worldly achievement are not, as such, entitled to a place among them. This is the goodly company of patriarchs and prophets and saints, who endured the reproach of Christ, of whom the world was not worthy, who form the line of succession through which the promises passed, who now compose the cloud of witnesses that encompass our mortal strife, men

of whom God is not ashamed to be called their God, with whom the Savior Himself is associated as the leader and finisher of the same faith.

In our text, however, we meet faith in its more simple and direct mode of operation. It appears as dealing with the unseen and future. From the life of the patriarchs the more militant, strenuous features are absent. In their lives it is allowed as in a region of seclusion and quietness to unfold before our eyes its simple beauty. Faith is here but another name for other-worldliness or heavenly-mindedness. Herein lies the reason why the writer dwells with such evident delight upon this particular part of the Old Testament narrative. The other figures he merely sketches, and with a rapid skillful stroke of the brush puts in the high lights of their lives where the glory of faith illumined them. But the figure of Abraham he paints with the lingering, caressing hand of love, so that something of the serenity and peacefulness of the original patriarchal story is reproduced in the picture: "By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise, for he looked for the city which has the foundations, whose builder and maker is God." The charm spread over this part of the subject to the author's vision also appears in this, that, after having already dismissed it and passed on to the portrayal of Abraham's faith in another form, as connected with the seed of the promise, he involuntarily returns to cast one more loving glance at it: "They died in faith, not having received the promises, but seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. And if indeed they had been mindful of the country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared them a city."

The other-worldliness of the patriarchs showed itself in this, that they confessed to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth. It found its visible expression in their dwelling in tents. Not strangers and pilgrims outside of Canaan, but strangers and pilgrims in the earth. The writer places all the emphasis on this, that they pursued their tent-life in the very land of promise, which was their own, as in a land not their own. Only in this way is a clear connection between the staying in tents and the looking forward to heaven obtained. For otherwise the tents might have signified merely that they considered themselves not at home when away from the holy land. If even in Canaan they carried within themselves the consciousness of pilgrimage then it becomes strikingly evident that it was a question of fundamental, comprehensive choice between earth and heaven. The adherence to the tent-life in the sight and amidst the scenes of the promised land fixes the aspiration of the patriarchs as aiming at the highest conceivable heavenly goal. It has in it somewhat of the scorn of the relative and of compromise. He who knows that for him a palace is in building does not dally with desires for improvement on a lower scale. Contentment with the lowest becomes in such a case profession of the highest, a badge of spiritual aristocracy with its proud insistence upon the ideal. Only the predestined inhabitants of the eternal city know how to conduct themselves in a simple tent as kings and princes of God.

As to its negative side, the feeling of strangeness on earth, even in Canaan, the writer could base his representation on the statement of Abraham to the sons of Heth: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you," and on the words of the aged Jacob to Pharaoh: "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years : few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." As to the positive side, the desire for a heavenly state, there is no such explicit

testimony in the narrative of Genesis. None the less the author was fully justified in affirming this also. It is contained by implication in the other. The refusal to build an abiding habitation in a certain place must be due to the recognition that one's true, permanent abode is elsewhere. The not-feeling-at-home in one country has for its inevitable counterpart homesickness for another. The writer plainly ascribes this to the patriarchs, and in doing so also ascribes to them a degree of acquaintance with the idea of a heavenly life. His meaning is not that, unknown to themselves, they symbolized through their mode of living the principle of destination for heaven. On the contrary, we are expressly told that they confessed, that they made it manifest, that they looked for, that they desired. There existed with them an intelligent and outspoken apprehension of the celestial world. Let us not say that such an interpretation of their minds is unhistorical, because they could not in that age have possessed a clear knowledge of the world to come. Rather, in reading this chapter on faith let us have faith, a large, generous faith in the uniqueness and spiritual distinction of the patriarchs as confessors, perhaps in advance of their time, of the heaven-centered life of the people of God. In other respects also Scripture represents the patriarchal period as lifted above the average level of the surrounding ages, even within the sphere of Special Revelation. Paul tells us that in the matter of grace and freedom from the law Abraham lived on a plane and in an atmosphere much higher than that of subsequent generations. Anachronisms these things are, if you will, but anachronisms of God, who does not let Himself be bound by time, but, seeing the end from the beginning, reserves the right to divide the flood of history, and to place on conspicuous islands at successive points great luminaries of his truth and grace shining far out into the future. The patriarchs had their vision of the heavenly country, a vision in the light of which the excellence or desirableness of every earthly home and country paled. Acquaintance with a fairer Canaan had stolen from their hearts the love of the land that lay spread around like a garden of paradise.

Of course, it does not necessarily follow from this that the author credits the patriarchs with a detailed, concrete knowledge of the heavenly world. In point of heavenly-mindedness he holds them up as models to be imitated. In point of information about the content of the celestial life he places the readers far above the reach of the Old Testament at its highest. To the saints of the New Covenant life and immortality and all the powers of the world to come have been opened up by Christ. The Christian state is as truly part and prelibation of the things above as a portal forms part of the house. If not wholly within, we certainly are come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God. And in this we are more than Abraham. No such Gospel broke in upon the solitude of these ancient shepherds, not even upon Jacob, when he saw the ladder reaching up into heaven with the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. But do you not see, that precisely on account of this difference in knowledge the faculty of faith had addressed to it a stronger challenge than it has in us, who pilgrim with heaven's door wide open in our sight? For this reason it is so profitable to return again and again to this part of the Old Testament Scriptures, and learn what great faith could do with less privilege, how precisely because it had such limited resource of knowledge, it made a sublimer flight, soaring with supreme dominion up to the highest heights of God.

Let us try briefly to analyze what this other-worldliness of the patriarchs involved, and in what respects it will be well for us to cultivate it. The first feature to be noted is that it is not essentially negative but positive in character. The core lies not in what it relinquishes but in what it seeks. Escape from the world here below and avoidance of the evil in the world do not furnish its primary motive. That is true only of the abnormal, morbid type of other-worldliness, that connected with pessimism and monastic seclusion. From an unwarranted identification with

these the true grace portrayed by Scripture has been exposed to much ill-considered criticism and fallen into disrepute. If heavenly-mindedness were an upward flight in the ignominious sense of the word, it would be the very opposite to the heroism of genuine faith, a seeking for a harbor of refuge, instead of a steering for the haven of home. Do not misunderstand me. It is only right that in some measure the bitter experience of sin and evil should contribute to the Christian's desire for heaven. The attraction of heaven is in part the attraction of freedom from sin. And not a little of the contempt poured upon it, while pretending to protest against cloistered withdrawal, springs in reality from a defective perception of the seriousness of sin. Where the eye has not by divine grace been opened to the world's wickedness, it is easy to look with disdain on the Christian's world-shyness. But the Christian, who knows that the end of sin cannot come until the end of this world, looks at the question in a light of his own. He is fully warranted in considering ridicule of this kind part of the reproach of Christ and bearing it with joy. Nor should we forget, that an excess of interest in the present life, when shown in the name of religion, is apt, in our day, to be a symptom of doubt or unbelief in regard to the life to come. Still the principle remains in force, that the desirability of heaven should never possess exclusively or mainly negative significance. It is not something first brought into the religious mind through sin. The lineage and birth-right of other-worldliness are of the oldest and noblest. By God Himself this traveler's unrest was implanted in the soul. Ever since the goal set by the Covenant of Works came within his ken, man carries with him in all his converse with this world the sense of appurtenance to another. This is but to say that supernaturalism forms from the outset the basis of true religion in man. Man belongs to two spheres. And Scripture not only teaches that these two spheres are distinct, it also teaches what estimate of relative importance ought to be placed upon them. Heaven is the primordial, earth the secondary creation. In heaven are the supreme realities; what surrounds us here below is a copy and shadow of the celestial things. Because the relation between the two spheres is positive, and not negative, not mutually repulsive, heavenly-mindedness can never give rise to neglect of the duties pertaining to the present life. It is the ordinance and will of God, that not apart from, but on the basis of, and in contact with, the earthly sphere man shall work out his heavenly destiny. Still the lower may never supplant the higher in our affections. In the heart of man time calls for eternity, earth for heaven. He must, if normal, seek the things above, as the flower's face is attracted by the sun, and the water-courses are drawn to the ocean. Heavenly-mindedness, so far from blunting or killing the natural desires, produces in the believer a finer organization, with more delicate sensibilities, larger capacities, a stronger pulse of life. It does not spell impoverishment, but enrichment of nature. The spirit of the entire Epistle shows this. The use of the words "city" and "country" is evidence of it. These are terms that stand for the accumulation, the efflorescence, the intensive enjoyment of values. Nor should we overlook the social note in the representation. A perfect communion in a perfect society is promised. In the city of the living God believers are joined to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, and mingle with the spirits of just men made perfect. And all this faith recognizes. It does not first need the storms and stress that invade to quicken its desire for such things. Being the sum and substance of all the positive gifts of God to us in their highest form, heaven is of itself able to evoke in our hearts positive love, such absorbing love as can render us at times forgetful of the earthly strife. In such moments the transcendent beauty of the other shore and the irresistible current of our deepest life lift us above every regard of wind or wave. We know that through weather fair or foul our ship is bound straight for its eternal port.

Next to the positiveness of its object the high degree of actuality in the working of this grace should be considered. Through the faith of heavenly-mindedness the things above reveal

themselves to the believer, are present with him, and communicate themselves to him. Though as yet a pilgrim, the Christian is never wholly separated from the land of promise. His tents are pitched in close view of the city of God. Heaven is present to the believer's experience in no less real a sense than Canaan with its fair hills and valleys lay close to the vision of Abraham. He walks in the light of the heavenly world and is made acquainted with the kindred spirits inhabiting it. And since the word "actual" in its literal sense means "that which works," the life above possesses for the believer the highest kind of actuality. He is given to taste the powers of the world to come, as Abraham breathed the air of Canaan, and was refreshed by the dews descending on its fields. The roots of the Christian's life are fed from those rich and perennial springs that lie deep in the recesses of converse with God, where prayers ascend and divine graces descend, so that after each season of tryst he issues, a new man, from the secrecy of his tent. Because it had this effect for the patriarchs, faith had so intimately joined to it the exercise of hope. It is no less the assurance of things hoped for than the proving of things not seen. It annihilates the distance of time as much as of space. If faith deals with heaven as it exists, hope seizes upon it as it will be at the end. Hope attaches itself to promises; it sees and greets from afar. As the Epistle describes it, it does not contemplate purely provisional and earthly developments, does not come to rest in the happenings of intermediate ages, but relates to the end. In one unbroken flight it soars to the goal of God's work in history, which is none other than the finished heaven. For heaven itself is subject to a process of preparation, so that its full content became accessible only to the patriarchs through a projection of their faith in time. The heaven for which they hoped was the heaven of redemption, enriched through the ages, become peopled with the successive generations of the saints of God, filled with the glory of Christ, the recreated paradise, towards which all the streams of grace springing up in time send their waters. The believer requires this new heaven, not simply the cosmical place that resulted from the first creation. Hence his heavenly-mindedness can never destroy interest in the unfolding of the ways of God throughout the history of the present world. Neither grows he impatient when the promise seems to tarry. For his hope also is in him a vitalizing power. It lives by the things that are not as though they were already, and makes the future supply strength for the present. Amidst all the vicissitudes of time the Christian knows that the foundations of the city of God are being quietly laid, that its walls are rising steadily, and that it will at last stand finished in all its golden glory, the crowning product of the work of God for his own.

But the faith of heavenly-mindedness in yet another, even profounder, sense surmounts time. In contrast with what is transitory it lays hold of the unchanging and eternal. The text expresses this by describing the city looked for as the city which has the foundations. The difference between the well-founded enduring edifice and the frail, collapsible tent has induced this turn of the figure. Already in the prophet Isaiah Jehovah declares: "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a precious cornerstone of sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." In this word the two ideas of sure foundation and faith are brought into close connection. Because the foundation is sure the believer can lay aside all disquietude and impatience in regard to the working out of the divine purpose. He need not make haste. It is of the essence of faith to crave assurance; hence it cannot come to rest until it have cast its anchor into the eternal. And heaven above all else partakes of the character of eternity. It is the realm of the unchangeable. In this lower world Time with its law of attrition is king. Nothing can escape his inexorable rule. What is must cease to be, what appears must vanish, what is built must be broken down, even though human heart should cherish it more than its own life. And this applies not merely to objects of natural affection; it involves also much that is of transitory purpose in the service and Church of

God. Even our religion in its earthly exercise is not exempt from the tragical aspect borne by all existence in time. The summons comes again and again: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house," and after a brief spell of comfort and delight we anew find ourselves in tents roaming through an inhospitable world. There is no help for these things. Like Abraham we must resolutely confess, that we are strangers and pilgrims in a land of time, and that the best this land can offer us is but a caravanserai to tarry in for a day and a night. Abraham would have undoubtedly rejoiced in the vision of the historical Jerusalem around which gather so many glories of God's redemptive work. But, suppose it had risen up before him in all its beauty, would that have been the soul-satisfying vision his faith desired? No, there is neither quietness nor repose for the believer's heart except on the bosom of eternity. There and there alone is shelter from the relentless pursuit of change. The inspired writer tells us that the two most momentous events in sacred history, the giving of the law on Sinai and the end of the world, signify the removal of things that are shaken, in order that such things as are not shakable may remain. And the second shaking is so radical and comprehensive that it involves not only the earth but likewise the heavens: it will sweep the transitory out of the life of the people of God even in the higher regions, and will leave them, when the smoke and dust of the upheaval are blown away, in a clear atmosphere of eternal life. But in this sense also faith is not purely prospective: it enables to anticipate; it draws down the imperishable substance of eternity into its vessel of time and feeds on it. The believer knows that even now there is in him that which has been freed from the law of change, a treasure that moth and rust cannot corrupt, true riches enshrined in his heart as in a treasury of God. Have we ever been impressed in reading the narrative of Genesis by the peacefulness and serenity enveloping the figures of the patriarchs? There is something else here besides the idyllic charm of rural surroundings. What enviable freedom from the unrest, the impatience, the feverish excitement of the children of this world! Our modern Christian life so often lacks the poise and stability of the eternal. Religion has come so overmuch to occupy itself with the things of time that it catches the spirit of time. Its purposes turn fickle and unsteady; its methods become superficial and ephemeral; it alters its course so constantly; it borrows so readily from sources beneath itself, that it undermines its own prestige in matters pertaining to the eternal world. Where lies the remedy? It would be useless to seek it in withdrawal from the struggles of this present world. The true corrective lies in this, that we must learn again to carry a heaven-fed and heaven-centered spirit into our walk and work below. The grand teaching of the Epistle that through Christ and the New Covenant the heavenly projects into the earthly, as the headlands of a continent project into the ocean, should be made fruitful for the whole tone and temper of our Christian service. Every task should be at the same time a means of grace from and an incentive to work for heaven. There has been One greater than Abraham, who lived his life in absolute harmony with this principle, in whom the fullest absorption in his earthly calling could not for a moment disturb the consciousness of being a child of heaven. Though, like unto the patriarchs. He had no permanent home, not event a tent, this was not in his case the result of a break with an earthly-minded past. It was natural to Him. In his mind were perfectly united the two hemispheres of supernaturalism, that of the source of power back of, and that of the eternal goal of life beyond every work. A religion that has ceased to set its face towards the celestial city, is bound sooner or later to discard also all supernatural resources in its endeavor to transform this present world. The days are perhaps not far distant when we shall find ourselves confronted with a quasi-form of Christianity professing openly to place its dependence on and to work for the present life alone, a religion, to use the language of

Hebrews, become profane and a fornicator like Esau, selling for a mess of earthly pottage its heavenly birth-right.

There are two more aspects of the patriarchal faith of heavenly-mindedness to be briefly considered. The first is its spirituality. Heavenly-mindedness is spiritual-mindedness. This pervades like an atmosphere the entire Epistle. We have already seen that even in the promised land the patriarchs remained tent-dwellers. God had a wise purpose in thus postponing for them personally the fulfilment of the temporal promise. Although Canaan was a goodly land, it was yet, after all, material and not of that higher substance we call spiritual. While capable of carrying up the mind to supernal regions, it also exposed to the danger of becoming satisfied with the blessing in its provisional form. That this danger was not imaginary the later history of Israel testifies. In order to guard against such a result in the case of the patriarchs God withheld from them the land and its riches and made of this denial a powerful spiritualizing discipline. By it they were led to reflect that, since the promise was theirs beyond all doubt, and yet they were not allowed to inherit it in its material form, that therefore it must in the last analysis relate to something far higher and different, something of which the visible and sensual is a mere image. Thus the conception of another sphere of being was introduced into their minds: henceforth they sought the better country. Not as if the things of sense were worthless in themselves, but because they knew of something transcendent that claimed their supreme affection. Their tastes and enjoyments had been raised to another plane. The refinement of grace had been imparted to them. For bodily hands there had been, as it were, substituted spiritual antennae, sensitive to intangible things. They had come to a mountain that could not be touched and yet could be felt. In all the treasures and promises of religion the one valuable thing is this spiritual core. In the word that God speaks we can taste all his goodness and grace. Hope itself is spiritualized, remaining no longer the hope of imagination but grasping in God the ideal root from which the whole future must spring and blossom in due time. The heavenly world does not appear desirable as simply a second improved edition of this life; that would be nothing else than earthly-mindedness projected into the future. The very opposite takes place: heaven spiritualizes in advance our present walk with God. Each time faith soars and alights behind the veil it brings back on its wings some of the subtle fragrance that there prevails. This also is an important principle in need of stress at the present day. If there is danger of Christianity being temporalized, there is no less danger of its being materialized. How easily do we fall into the habit of handling the things of our holy faith after an external, quantitative, statistical fashion, so that they turn flesh under our touch and emit a savor of earth? If at any time or in any form this fault should threaten to befall us, let us revisit the tents of the patriarchs and rehearse the lesson, that in religion the body without the soul is worthless and without power.

The other point to be observed is this, that heaven is the normal goal of our redemption. We all know that religion is older than redemption. At the same time the experience of redemption is the summit of religion. The two have become so interwoven that the Christian cannot conceive of a future state from which the redemptive mould and color would be absent. The deepest and dearest in us is so much the product of salvation, that the vision of God as such and the vision of God our Savior melt into one. We could not separate them if we would. The simple reason is that precisely in redeeming us God has revealed to us the inmost essence of his deity. No one but a redeemed creature can truly know what it is for God to be God, and what it means to worship and possess Him as God. This is the fine gold of the Christian's experience, sweeter to him than honey and the honeycomb. The river that makes glad the city of God is the river of grace. The believer's mind and heart will only in heaven compass the full riches, the length and breadth and

depth and height of the love of God. No one can drink so deeply of it here, but he will more deeply drink hereafter. Blessed be God, no stream of Lethe flows this side of his city to wash away from our minds the remembrance of redeeming grace! The life above will be a ceaseless coming to Jesus, the Mediator of a better covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than Abel. The Lamb slain for our sins will be all the glory of Emmanuel's land.

Finally the highest thing that can be spoken about this city is that it is the city of our God, that He is in the midst of it. Traced to its ultimate root heavenly-mindedness is the thirst of the soul after God, the living God. The patriarchs looked not for some city in general, but for a city whose builder and maker was God. It is characteristic of faith that it not merely desires the perfect but desires the perfect as a work and gift of God. A heaven that was not illumined by the light of God, and not a place for closest embrace of Him, would be less than heaven. God as builder and maker thereof has put the better part of Himself into his work. Therefore those who enter the city are in God. The thought is none other than that of the seer in the Apocalypse: "I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God, the Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof. And that city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God lightens it, and the throne of God and the Lamb are therein: and his servants shall do Him service, and they shall see his face, and his name shall be on their foreheads." And the faith is the faith of the Psalmist, who spoke: "Whom have I in heaven but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." Here it is impossible for us to tell how truly and to what extent our relation to God is a relation of pure, disinterested love in which we seek Him for his own sake. There, when all want and sin-frailty shall have slipped away from us, we shall be able to tell. It was because God discerned in the souls of the patriarchs, underneath all else, this personal love, this homesickness for Himself, that He caused to be recorded about them the greatest thing that can be spoken of any man: that God is not ashamed to be called their God, and that He has prepared for them the city of their desire.