
The Abiding Word

The
ABIDING
WORD

AN ANTHOLOGY OF DOCTRINAL
ESSAYS FOR THE YEARS
1954-1955

Volume Three

Continuing the Centennial Series

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE
Saint Louis, 1960

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SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI**

**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD No. 47-19571
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Publisher's Preface

The essays in this volume were selected by the Literature Board of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod from those presented at the District conventions of 1954 and 1955. They are made available as a continuation of Volume I (1946) and Volume II (1947), issued under the direction of the Centennial Literature Committee and edited by Dr. Theodore Laetsch. Since the original two volumes, published under the title **THE ABIDING WORD**, are still in demand, the publisher is encouraged to make these additional essays available as Volume III of the series.

THE PUBLISHER

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The Abiding Word

The Last Things

Lift Up Your Heads; for Your Redemption Draweth Nigh

NINETEEN hundred and forty-two. "Blockbusters fall on London. One bomb has the explosive power of 20 tons of TNT and wipes out an entire city block."

1945. "A-bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Explosive power of 20,000 tons of TNT. 49,221 dead; 58,839 wounded."

1952. "H-bomb tested in Pacific Proving Grounds. Explosive force: 5,000,000 tons of TNT. It tore a cavity in the floor of the ocean — a crater — measuring a full mile in diameter and 175 feet in depth at its lowest point. If such an explosion had taken place over a modern city, the crater would have been surrounded by a circle of complete destruction three miles in radius, while beyond this again a zone of 'severe-to-light' damage would extend for another seven miles."

1954. "Newest H-bombs develop a power of 40,000,000 tons of TNT. The area of total destruction caused by one burst extended out more than 12 miles from the center, as compared with less than one mile for A-bombs. Direct damage was inflicted up to 40 miles away. Pressure from the burst shook an entire island about 200 miles from the explosion. . . . Questions are being raised now whether H-bomb explosions on targets in the American Midwest might not easily contaminate much of the nation's food supply. . . . The West Coast, meanwhile, could be virtually paralyzed by four well-placed H-bombs, informed observers believe. Industry, communications, food-distribution centers are largely concentrated at Los Angeles, San Francisco-Oakland, Portland, and Seattle. One bomb apiece, the recent tests indicate, could wipe out those cities and bring things to a standstill in this whole area."

1954. "Warning has gone out from the FBI that 'suitcase bombs' can be made light enough to carry. The bomb is a snug fit in any

large-sized suitcase or traveling bag. Blast effect of these bombs could be greater than that of A-bombs used against Hiroshima and Nagasaki in World War II. There is no danger of the bomb exploding until after the saboteur has left the city, even returned to Europe. Several bombs can be planted in the same city, or in different cities, all exploded simultaneously by remote control. Conceivably, there could be simultaneous blasts in New York, Boston, Baltimore, Washington, Chicago, and Detroit, touched off by a single short-wave radio transmitter in Pittsburgh."

1954. "A Japanese scientist was quoted as saying that Russia was reported producing a nitrogen bomb. . . . A nitrogen bomb may be less destructive than the cobalt bomb momentarily, but more dangerous because of the accumulation of radioactivity. If thirty such bombs are detonated simultaneously, all mankind will perish in several years' time."

1954. "If I keep on thinking about the hydrogen bomb and the disaster it may bring to us, I can't stand it. . . . I know that death is inevitable, but to keep thinking about it is more than I can take."

A. D. 33. "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

These quotations indicate to us that "we are living in a world electric with the ominous." In not a few places mass hysteria has gripped the population. Others attempt to develop a grim apathy, such as is expressed in a line of the poet Burns: "But oh! it hardens a' within, And petrifies the feelin'." Still others try to stifle the feelings of dark foreboding by adopting as their slogan: "Let us eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." What shall we Christians do, particularly we who as representatives of our congregations are gathered here these days in a synodical convention for the purpose of discussing the King's business? Against the background briefly set forth in the introduction you have asked me to present an essay to you on the doctrine of the Last Things — a timely topic indeed. I shall gladly present this doctrine as God grants me His grace. And my aim shall be, not to convey to you a frenzied message of despair, but rather one of joyful comfort and hope. I shall attempt to let this marvelous truth weave itself through the entire essay: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21:28)

Our final redemption consists in our Savior's personal appearance to take us home. That, of course, necessitates the second coming of Christ. This second coming has been denied by many. Already at the apostle Peter's time, scoffers made a direct denial of this truth with the words: "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Peter 3:4). However, the second coming of our Lord is set forth with great emphasis throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament we have such statements as these: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come" (Joel 2:31). Malachi says: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (4:5). Job says (19:25): "For I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." The psalmist says (96:13): "For He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth; He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth."

Turning to the New Testament, we find our Savior establishing the fact of His second coming and the apostles taking up the refrain. We have statements which use the term "His coming." The Savior says (Luke 18:8): "Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" The disciples ask Him (Matt. 24:3): "And what shall be the sign of Thy coming?" The 27th verse of the same chapter refers to it in the statement of the Lord: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." And again in the 37th verse: "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." In Luke 12:40 Jesus says: "Be ye therefore ready also; for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not." In Luke 9:26 our Savior says: "For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory." And in Matt. 25:31 we read: "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory."

Leaving the Four Gospels, we find the fact of Christ's coming stressed in many letters of the apostles. The first reference is recorded in Acts 1:11: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen

Him go into heaven." St. Paul says 1 Cor. 11:26: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." In the fifth verse of the fourth chapter he says: "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come"; and 1 Cor. 15:23: "But every man in his own order: Christ the First Fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." To the Thessalonians Paul writes (1 Thess. 2:19): "For what is our hope or joy or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" And in the next chapter: "To the end He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints" (1 Thess. 3:13). Also in 1 Thess. 4:15: "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep"; and once more in 5:23: "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." St. John speaks the same language in 1 John 2:28: "And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." James says (5:8): "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

Other statements of Holy Writ inform us that the Lord will *appear*, that He will be *revealed*. St. Paul writes to the Thessalonians (2, 1:7): "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels." Peter writes to the dispersed Christians: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:7). And in the thirteenth verse of the same chapter he says: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." In the 13th verse of the fourth chapter he writes: "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." In 1 Tim. 6:14 Paul says: "That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearing of our

Lord Jesus Christ"; and again in 2 Tim. 4:1, 8: "I charge thee therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing"; and "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." Paul writes to Titus (2:13): "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." It is written in Heb. 9:28: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." Again in Heb. 10:37: "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come and will not tarry."

Still other passages of Scripture refer to the coming of our Lord by emphasizing the *last day*. To His disciples Jesus said in John 6:39: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." V. 40: "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day." V. 44: "No man can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day." V. 54: "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." Paul says: "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:8). In Phil. 1:6 and 10 we read: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ"; "That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ." Paul writes 1 Thess. 5:2: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." 2 Tim. 1:12: "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day"; v. 18: "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day." Peter writes (2, 2:9): "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished"; and in 2, 3:10:

“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” In Jude 6 we have these words: “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” And in Rev. 6:17 St. John writes: “For the great day of His wrath is come.” All these God-inspired passages of Holy Writ speak in most unmistakable terms of the Lord’s coming, of His revelation, of His appearance on the last day; and they cause us joyously to lift up our heads, for they proclaim to us that our redemption draweth nigh.

How long must we wait for the coming of our Lord? When will He appear? On the basis of Scripture we must answer: The exact time is unknown to man. From the Savior Himself we have these words: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matt. 24:36); and in Mark 13:32 we have almost the same statement: “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” Among the myriads of angels in heaven there is not a single one who knows at what time the Lord will come to judgment. More than that, He says that “neither the Son” knows. That is a statement which causes surprise. According to Mark 13:3 the Savior sat upon the Mount of Olives over against the temple; and Peter and James and John and Andrew asked him privately: “Tell us, when shall these things be?” In reply to this question the Lord said: I don’t know — “neither the Son” knoweth. How is this to be explained? In their essential Oneness the Three Persons know all things. Whatsoever is known to the Father is also known to the Son and the Holy Ghost. According to His divine nature Jesus is just as all-knowing as the Father is. But He has also a human nature, according to which He did not always and not fully use those divine attributes communicated to this human nature. For this reason Peter could say to the Jews: “Ye killed the Prince of Life” (Acts 3:15), and Paul could write to the Corinthians that the princes of this world had “crucified the Lord of Glory” (1 Cor. 2:8). So here on Olivet He did not make use of His divine omniscience and was thus impelled to say that He knew not the hour of His coming to judgment. How the Son of God could thus during His humiliation restrict Himself in

the use of the divine attributes is one of the mysteries of His person; yet the fact is revealed in the Bible.

In spite of Christ's express declaration that the day and hour of His coming should remain hidden, there have always been some who could not refrain from attempting to fix the date. In Luther's time a certain Michael Stiefel set the day of redemption for October 19, 1533, about 8 A. M. In the early part of the last century there was a theologian by the name of Bengel who expected Christ in 1836. Russell nailed Judgment Day down to October 1874; after he had found an error in arithmetic, he made another computation, and up came October 1914. William Miller of the Adventists selected 1843 for the end of the world. But after 1843 had gone into history, he found that the really correct date was October 1844! Even in Benton Harbor, Michigan, there was a wise prophet by the name of Benjamin Purnell of the House of David who discovered that Christ was to appear in 1916. Brethren, let us rejoice that our redemption draweth nigh; but let us not don white robes and ascend mountaintops on a day which has been designated for the Lord's coming by the dreams of pseudo prophets. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man" still stands. Our Savior said: "For the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:40). And again He told His disciples: "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:27); and St. Peter wrote: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." Miller and Russell and Purnell and all their ilk would find it rather difficult to predict the time for the next flash of lightning or the appearance of a burglar during the night. Far more impossible is it to foretell the day of the Lord's coming.

I. SIGNS

We have a wonderfully kind and gracious Savior. At one time He said through His apostle Paul: "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice. . . . The Lord is at hand" (Phil. 4:4, 5). Even in the prospect of His second coming He wants us to be, not pessimistic, but optimistic and cheerful. Because of our sinful nature, however, and a frequently fear-filled heart we are so easily inclined to forget the glorious goal toward which we are moving;

and for that reason our Lord has not only many passages in the Bible which establish the fact of His coming, but He also uses an immense number of signs which day after day throughout our entire earthly pilgrimage are to indicate to us and constantly to remind us that the Lord is near, and thus to raise our expectations for that glorious event. In Matt. 24:33 He says: "When you shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors." Of these signs the Lord speaks especially in Matthew 24, Luke 21, and 2 Thessalonians 2. We can divide them into three classes:

1. Signs in the realm of nature
2. Signs in the social world
3. Signs in the church

SIGNS IN THE REALM OF NATURE

We read in Matt. 24:29: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." In Mark 13:8 our Lord says: "And there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles; these are the beginnings of sorrows." And once more He says in Luke 21:25: "And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth."

Here we are reminded of eclipses, the darkening of the sun and of the moon, and the departure of stars from their places. What else was it but a sign of our approaching redemption when in 1952 the Greenwich Observatory discovered giant sun spots, the third-largest on record? Every prediction of an eclipse of the sun or of the moon in our almanacs and annuals contains the joyful message: "Your redemption draweth nigh."

What forcible language does our Lord speak concerning the approaching end, and our imminent redemption, through other disturbances in nature, through earthquakes, atoms, and other stunning disasters, not only in North America but throughout all the nations of the world! Let me refer to only a few occurring within the last four years. In June and July 1950 a series of earthquakes

in Japan killed 3,200 people. The same year 430 were killed, and 45 villages and 1,500 houses were destroyed in an earthquake in Turkey. Right here in the Pacific Northwest earth tremors caused \$25 million worth of damage in April 1950. In 1952: In the Philippine Islands repeated eruptions killed at least 250 and left about 500 missing and 20,000 homeless. In Nicaragua an earthquake killed thousands; and in El Salvador it took the lives of 375 and made 25,000 homeless. In New Guinea 20 villages and 4,000 people were destroyed by volcanic eruptions.

The sea and the waves roaring: In 1950: Three million people were left homeless in China by the floods of the Yangtze and Yellow rivers. At another place in China, in a three-day flood, 1,000 were drowned and 200,000 lost their homes. Floods caused the death of more than 4,000 people in Guatemala. A shocking disaster was caused by the July 1950 floods in the Yangtze and Yellow river valleys, the worst in a half century, in which no fewer than 20 million people were made homeless, and 57,000 drowned in Hunan Province alone. One hundred and fifty lives were lost and 150,000 were made homeless in the November 1952 floods of the Po River valley in Italy. In August of that year roaring floods in Manchuria took the lives of 1,800, and in addition 3,000 were missing. You will recall that in May 1949 forty people died and thousands were made homeless in floods right here near Portland at Vanport. And the most disastrous floods in the history of the United States occurred in 1952 in Kansas, Oklahoma, Missouri, and Illinois, when nearly 200,000 people fled their homes, 100,000 acres of crops were ruined, forty people lost their lives, and property damage was estimated at \$870 million.

Like earthquakes and floods, so are also storms an indication that the day is rapidly approaching when we shall be forever with the Lord. Also these signs our heavenly Father is using in abundant measure. In 1950: On the Philippine Islands a typhoon left more than 100 dead and missing and 20,000 homeless. A cyclone killed 1,000 people in India. After a typhoon in Japan 123 were counted dead and 150,000 without homes. A typhoon in Okinawa damaged and destroyed 40,000 buildings and took the lives of more than 8,000 people. The same kind of disaster killed scores of people and made 100,000 people homeless in central Ecuador. In a pro-

longed hurricane in the Caribbean region the death toll was 300, and property damages mounted close to one billion dollars. During the first six months of 1953 there were 300 tornadoes in the United States alone, in which the dead numbered 400 and the loss of property was estimated to have been 230 million dollars. — Distress of nations with perplexity was caused among other incidents by an avalanche in Switzerland, killing 300 people; by a prolonged heat wave in Texas; by a nationwide, record-low cold wave throughout the U. S., which took the lives of more than 200 (in January and February 1950).

These are only a few of the innumerable signs in nature which our Lord uses as harbingers of His appearance in glory. Christians have attuned their ears to the joyous harmonies of the Word of God; and hence every newflash of destruction and disaster will enable them to hear the beckoning overtones of our blessed Savior: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

SIGNS IN THE SOCIAL WORLD

Wars: In Matt. 24:6f. our Lord says: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. . . . For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." And again in Luke 21:9f.: "But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified, for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Then said He unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom." It is hardly necessary to dwell at any length on these signs foretold by our Savior. In this one present generation most of us have lived through two world wars, the horrors and shambles of which were less than a century ago altogether unthinkable. Never before has this statement of the Lord applied to so many people in so many nations at one time; "And upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity" (Luke 21:25), and again: "Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth" (Luke 21:26). In wars before this century the general rule was to show chivalry to the enemy and mercy for the noncombatants. But today we have total war, the sporting thing is to drop bombs on defenseless cities, killing women as well as babies and noncombatant men. One writer

put it this way: "The wounded began streaming in, carried by their relatives on stretchers or holding canes or hobbling or crawling as best they might. Mangled and torn, streaming blood, screaming from pain of shattered limbs and torn bodies, or fearfully burned from the exploding incendiary bombs, men and women and little children poured into the mission grounds. Cursing with fury at the bombers who could so torture a civilian population, we cameramen and correspondents carried wounded to the dressing-tents, put out fires, and scanned the sky, for the droning of the motors was beginning again."

During the first World War, this was the widespread slogan: "A war to end all war!" And no doubt there were a large number of people who foresaw the day when at least one statement of the Bible would be out of date: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars." And during the second World War there was a sickeningly large number of writers who in magazines and religious journals foretold the era of universal peace and world brotherhood the moment the Nazis had been brought down to their knees. But hardly had the nations completed their demobilization and formed the U. N. for the prevention of future conflict, when the Korean War was forced upon them. And the volcanic dangers in Indochina, in the Korean settlement, in the Formosa situation, in the communist-infested countries of South America, in Western Europe, in the Near East, give no hope for better days unless it be by a miraculous intervention of God, who still rules the nations. The insidious, fiendish, slimy philosophy — or shall we say religion? — of the communists seeks the subjugation of the world. And as long as that philosophy dominates the hearts of millions, it appears that we shall experience in an ever greater measure the fulfillment of the Savior's statement: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars." And even if communism should burst like a bubble, as practically all isms do, we shall still hear of wars and rumors of wars. Shocking, terrifying statements, aren't they? And yet we face the future with quiet confidence and peace, for "when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

Wickedness and materialism and secularism. Other signs in the social world which are to remind us of that redemption promised

by our Savior are the conditions which are very similar to those in Noah's and Lot's times. Jesus speaks of these in Luke 17:26ff.: "And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days [notice the plural "days" referring to the 120 years before the Flood and the era before Christ's coming, while in v.30 there is the singular "day" when conditions have not changed] of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage [they absolutely disregarded all warning and lived on as if the warnings of Noah meant nothing] until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the Flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all."

St. Paul speaks in a similar vein in his Second Letter to Timothy, the third chapter: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God."

Never a day passes but the public press and the radio bring us accounts of crime. In *Uniform Crime Reports for the United States*, published by J. Edgar Hoover two months ago, we read that "major crimes reached a new high of 2,159,080 in 1953. Crime is outstripping population rate of growth four to one. Our population increased five per cent, and crime jumped twenty per cent since 1950. City crimes in 1953 stood thirty-nine per cent above the pre-World War II average of 1937-39. Car thieves stole 226,530 automobiles. Burglars took more than 78 million dollars in money and property. Rapes numbered 17,900. Killers took the lives of 12,810 people. Every other person arrested for burglary was under 18 years of age, and one out of three was not yet 16. Arrests of young people under age 18 increased 7.9 per cent in 1953." (Pp. 67-69)

The steadily mounting figure of young scoundrels, habitual law-breakers at twelve, and hardened criminals at seventeen leads us

to the conclusion that the basic factor of this condition is the home. Effective home training has become the exception rather than the rule. Said a chief probation officer: "It is no uncommon experience for probation officers to have youth reveal that authority was never known until the policeman placed his hand on the youngster's shoulder — a rather late period in life to learn for the first time what authority is and pay the price in being branded a criminal." And a physician declared that "wickedness, vice, and ungodliness in the home are among the chief causes of depravity and sin of the young." And here is a statement from a chief of police: "I have found that the great body of delinquent children and wayward young men and women are recruited from the homes of divorced parents. . . . The greatest menace to civilization is careless, indifferent, or divorced parents."

Some years ago a Minnesota judge said (and it does not appear that conditions have changed since then): "Boys, girls, children, men, and women are drinking as they never drank before." The devastating consequences of drink are every imaginable crime. From the tavern the path leads to the dance floor. A New York chief of police made the statement that three fourths of the women and girls living lives of immorality had been led from the path of virtue by the dance. A social-welfare worker in Chicago said: "The dance hall is one of the principal pitfalls into which the young girl of Chicago stumbles to her moral ruin." And a former proprietor of the Los Angeles Dancing Academy has made these statements: "It is a startling fact, but a fact nevertheless, that two thirds of the girls who enter dancing schools are ruined before the year is out. And three fourths of the outcasts had a man's arm about them for the first time at a social dance. Of the 200 brothel inmates whom I talked with personally, 163 regarded the dancing school and the ballroom as the direct cause of their downfall."

Modern literature fills the minds of young people with filth and immorality; obscene pictures in magazines rarely shock the readers; and many movies and television shows pervert our rising generation.

With this constant increase in depravity, crime, and wickedness, must we not come to the conclusion that the word of the Lord applies more today than ever before: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to

a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful; who, knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same but have pleasure in them that do them." (Rom. 1:28-32)

Sad, sad beyond description is this account of the life of modern society. And yet our loving Savior uses all these manifestations of man's wickedness as signs which are to bring us the message: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

SIGNS IN THE CHURCH

Also in the church there are events which our Lord uses as signs to remind us that He will come to lead us into eternal life. In Matt. 24:24 He says: "For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders." St. Paul writes to Timothy (1, 4:1ff.): "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." In Matt. 24:11 Jesus said: "And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many." Paul wrote: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. 4:3, 4)

The truths of these prophetic statements are borne out by conditions in the church today. "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." But the wisdom of man is placed above the Word of truth, the Bible. The cardinal doctrines of our Christian faith are denied and ridiculed, and the doctrines of

rationalism are substituted. Some churchmen deny the creation by God as set forth in Genesis 1, they propound evolution; churchmen deny the virgin birth of our Savior, they deny the deity of Christ, they ridicule the redemption of men through the blood of Jesus. Some churchmen deny the resurrection of Jesus, they deny the existence of hell, they pervert all the fundamental doctrines of God's Book of Truth. As wolves that devour the flock of the Good Shepherd, many religious leaders come in sheep's clothing, proclaiming a perverted religion which is easy to take, which can be professed together with one's adherence to the devil, the world, and our flesh. Indifference toward the Word of Him who said through Paul (Gal. 1:9): "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed"; unionism, refusal to avoid false teachers, agreements to disagree in matters of doctrine — all these conditions in the religious sphere are in the providence of God signs which say to us: "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

The Antichrist: Another sign in the church with which the Lord points to our final redemption is the fact that the Antichrist shall be revealed. Of this St. Paul speaks in 2 Thess. 2:1-10: "Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit nor by word nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means; for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. Remember ye not that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work; only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming; even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and

with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." And in 1 John 2:18 we read: "Little children, it is the last time; and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

We have not the time to enter upon an extended discussion of the Antichrist. Suffice it here to say that we identify this Antichrist with the Roman papacy. Our Lutheran Church has always taught and teaches today: "Now it is manifest that the Roman pontiffs with their adherents defend and practice godless doctrines and godless services. And the marks (all the vices) of Antichrist plainly agree with the kingdom of the pope and his adherents" (*Trigl.*, 515, 39). And again: "This teaching shows forcefully that the pope is the very Antichrist, who has exalted himself above, and opposed himself against, Christ, because he will not permit Christians to be saved without his power, which nevertheless is nothing and is neither ordained nor commanded by God. This is, properly speaking, to *exalt himself above all that is called God*, as Paul says 2 Thess. 2:4" (*Trigl.*, 475). St. Paul says: "For that day shall not come except there come a falling away first and that man of sin be revealed." Consequently one of the signs preceding Judgment Day was to be the revealing of the Antichrist. And since he has been revealed through Luther's Reformation, we find also in the activity of popery the language of the Lord: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

II. RESURRECTION

Our Lord has promised that He will come to bless us with an eternal redemption. Now is that possible? All those who have left this world before us are dead. And unless Judgment Day should appear before we depart this life, we, too, shall be among the dead. The answer is: Death will not last forever; the day is coming when we shall be raised from the dead. Like all other Biblical truths, so also this is denied by many. When at Athens they heard Paul speak of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked (Acts 17:32). The apostle told the Corinthians that these deniers

“have not the knowledge of God” (1 Cor. 15:34), and Christ says Matt. 22:29: Ye know not “the power of God.”

Turning to Holy Scripture, we find that it clearly teaches the resurrection of the dead throughout the New Testament. John 5:28 our Savior said: “For the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” Again in John 6:40: “And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the Last Day.” To the Sadducees He said: “For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Mark 12:25). At the very beginning of the New Testament era Peter and John “preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead” (Acts 4:2). To the philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics Paul “preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18). Before the Sanhedrin Paul spoke of “the hope and resurrection of the dead” (Acts 23:6). In his defense before the governor Felix, Paul said: And I “have hope toward God . . . that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15). And in his defense before Agrippa, Paul said: “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?” (Acts 26:8). Paul wrote to the Romans (8:11): “He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. 8:11). The apostle wrote to the Corinthians in 1, 6:14: “And God hath both raised up the Lord and will also raise up us by His own power,” and he expressed a similar truth in 2 Cor. 4:14: “Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus.” He writes Phil. 3:21: “Who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.” John speaks of the resurrection when he says (1, 3:2): “But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” Paul wrote to the Thesalonians: “And the dead in Christ shall rise first” (1 Thess. 4:16). Again, in 2 Cor. 5:10 he certainly implies the resurrection when he writes: “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” And then we have that magnificent fifteenth chapter in

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, where he, in 58 verses, dwells on Christ's resurrection and our resurrection. On the basis of the divinely inspired, inerrant Word of God every Christian confesses: "I believe in the resurrection of the dead." And when our Savior tells us: "Your redemption draweth nigh," He therewith includes as one of the steps toward that redemption our resurrection. What a comforting truth to know, that our sin-infested, preciously redeemed bodies, which from the cradle to the grave are subject to a multitude of ills and often racked with pain, shall not remain in the dark tomb, but rise again from the dust of the earth!

There are people, called Premillenarians, who teach that the resurrection of the saints will take place at the beginning of the millennium and the resurrection of all others at the coming of Christ unto judgment. But the Bible teaches one general resurrection of all the dead at the end of time. Speaking of the believers, Christ says that He will raise them up at the Last Day (John 6:40). And in John 5:28, 29 He informs us that the good and the evil will be raised at the same time, saying: "For the hour is coming in the which *all* that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." This resurrection will take place when Christ comes to judge the quick and the dead, for St. Paul writes 1 Thess. 4:16: "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. (Incidentally, this statement, "the dead in Christ shall rise first," has no reference to a premillennial resurrection of the believers, but declares that the dead in Christ shall rise before the living believers shall at Christ's coming be caught up in the clouds with Him. This is what St. Paul wrote: "And the dead in Christ shall rise first; *then* we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." (V. 17)

What will cause us to rise on the Last Day? Will life be generated in our dead bodies as a seed imparts life to a new plant? Or will the soul after long journeying gradually find its way back into the body from which it was separated at the time of death and thus be reunited with it? No, neither is true. The resurrection

of our bodies is an act of God's omnipotence. St. Paul says 2 Cor. 1:9: "We should not trust in ourselves but in God, which raiseth the dead." And Jesus said: "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will" (John 5:21). The Redeemer of the world is also the Reviver of the dead. He who loved us, bled and died for us, will also call us from the grave at the Last Day in preparation for our eternal redemption.

And here again it is comforting to know that *all* those who believed in Christ and looked forward to their redemption will be included in this resurrection. When we are placed into the grave, we are helpless, altogether lifeless. And even our last resting place may disappear entirely from the observation of man. But that need not arouse any fear in our heart. Our Lord assures us through Paul: "There shall be a resurrection of the dead" (Acts 24:15); and in John 5:28 He says: "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth." Trust the Lord that on the day of resurrection you and I, because of the kindness of our Savior, shall not be missing.

Even those who were not believers in this world will be raised from the dead. Some deny this. Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses teach the complete annihilation of the wicked in body and soul. But if their doctrine is to stand, then we must eliminate from Scripture such statements as these: "All that are in the graves shall come forth" (John 5:28) and "A resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15). Man can resist Christ's call to arise spiritually, that is, to believe the Gospel. But no one will be able to resist the call of Christ on the Last Day to come forth from the grave.

As to the question what rises on Judgment Day, we have the plain words of Scripture: "All that are in *the graves* shall hear His voice," whatever of men is "in the graves," hence the bodies of men. The bodies which will arise on the day of resurrection will be the identical bodies which existed in this world. What had died and decayed, rises and becomes alive. He who denies this denies the very term "resurrection." Our Lord says: "All that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that *have done good*, unto the resurrection of life; and they that *have done evil*, unto the

resurrection of damnation." If entirely different bodies and souls were to be created, the words of our Lord: "have done good," "have done evil," would be meaningless. There are, of course, those who contend that the human body undergoes a constant change and that at the end of every seven years it consists of entirely new particles of matter and that the old particles may enter another body, or that the elements of the body turned to dust have been assimilated by other bodies, and the like, and that hence our bodies cannot arise. Our reply to such doubting skeptics is: "Ye know not the power of God." Our confession is that of the God-inspired Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth and that He shall stand at the Latter Day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet *in my flesh* shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and *mine eyes* shall behold, and *not another*" (Job 19:25-27). And with St. Paul we say: "Who [Christ] shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." (Phil. 3:21)

The body of Christ after His resurrection was His own body and was recognized by His disciples as such; but it was freed from the limitations of space, could pass through closed doors, and could appear and disappear as He willed. Being a spiritual body, it had qualities similar to those pertaining to the spirit world, and was freed from the weaknesses and limitations of the natural body. God will give to man such a body as pleases Him, according to 1 Cor. 15:28, 44, 49. It will be a spiritual body, endowed with new and marvelous powers. It will not be dependent on food and drink.

St. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 that the body which dies is corruptible, but that it shall be raised incorruptible; it is sown in dishonor and weakness, but it shall be raised in glory and power; it is sown a natural body, but it is raised a spiritual body. Such a change in the qualities of the body is necessary, because "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:50). For this reason the believer, though forgiven, dies nevertheless, in order that through death and the resurrection a new body may be brought forth from the grave. Just so the grain of wheat is sown into the ground and decays, but is raised up with a new body (v. 37). For the same reason also the bodies of those who are alive at Christ's second

coming shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump, in order that those persons, though they escape bodily death, may nevertheless have a spiritual body. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:51, 53). The bodies of all the saints shall be made fit tabernacles for their redeemed, regenerated, and glorified souls.

Consequently, in that redemption which the Savior promises us, our present, frail, mortal bodies will have the following attributes: they will be immortal (Luke 20:36) and incorruptible. They will be glorious and perfect. They will be "fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil 3:21). "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun" (Matt. 13:43). They will be free from all the ailments, afflictions, and defects of the earthly body. They will be spiritual, and thus not only be freed from the limitations of matter as we now know it, but endowed with spiritual qualities which will make them perfect organs of the glorified souls that are to inhabit them forever in that redemption which at present still lies in the future, but which shall definitely be ours through the atonement of our beloved Jesus.

In Luke 20:36 we have the statement: "They are equal unto the angels." What does this mean? That is interpreted by the words: "They neither marry nor are given in marriage." Their being equal unto the angels does not mean that there will be a loss of sex, as some contend. Luther explains the matter in brief terms: "The constitution of the body remains the same, but not the use of the body."

As to the question whether all the elect in heaven will be of the same height, the same bodily stature, or whether there will be a difference as we find it here in the world between children and adults, it would appear that the latter is the more probable, for in Rev. 20:12 we read: "I saw the dead, small and great (*tous megalous kai tous mikrous*) stand before God." Bodily deformities as well as the marks of old age will, of course, be removed, since all physical defects and aging are wholly the consequence of sin. That is the glorious resurrection which will be the immediate prelude to our final redemption.

III. JUDGMENT

"Your redemption draweth nigh!" Before we shall be able to enjoy this redemption in eternal perfection, we must also pass through the Final Judgment. The judgment of the world is joined closely to the visible return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead. In Matt. 25:31 our Savior says: "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him"; and the next words are: "Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left." The same Jesus who stood before Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate and was judged and condemned by both will at the Last Day pass judgment, not only on Caiaphas and Pilate, but on all the quick and the dead. "God hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained," says Paul in Acts 17:31. And Peter says in Acts 10:42: "He was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead." In John 5:27 Jesus informs us that the Father "hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man."

Whether a person will or will not submit to this judgment is not a matter of personal choice. *All men must* appear before the judgment seat of Christ, according to 2 Cor. 5:10, and Paul writes to the Romans (14:10): "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." The Bible is very explicit in emphasizing that "all nations" (Matt. 25:32), "the world" (Acts 17:31), the "quick and the dead" (2 Tim. 4:1), will be judged.

Of particular interest to us must be the question: What will guide the Savior in reaching a verdict? What will be the norm of judgment? A human judge bases his sentence on the laws of the state. Christ says: "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the Last Day" (John 12:48). From the preceding verses we must infer that this word is the Gospel, which men receive in faith or reject in unbelief. Paul writes Rom. 2:16: "In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel." And in Mark 16:16 He indicated the norm by which He will judge man when He said: "He that be-

lieveth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." The decisive question will be how men have treated the grace of God which was offered them in Christ Jesus (John 3:18). They will be assigned to eternal life or to eternal death according as they have accepted or rejected that grace and possess or do not possess the righteousness of Christ. Both the believers and the unbelievers will be found to have broken God's holy Law and to have deserved eternal punishment. But the believers will be accounted righteous on account of the merit of Christ in whom they believe, and will receive eternal life as the reward of grace. The unbelievers, on the other hand, having rejected the grace of God which freely offered them the forgiveness of sins and a robe of righteousness for Christ's sake, will have nothing with which to appear before the judgment but their own record of sin; and that will brand them guilty and deserving of eternal death. The norm or criterion of judgment, in other words, will be the question: Have you believed the Gospel of Christ for the forgiveness of your sin, or have you rejected it? (Cp. Joseph Stump, *The Christian Faith*, 1935, p. 408.)

If we wish to have an exact account of the events which will transpire during the Final Judgment and of the statements which will be made by the Judge, we must refer to Matt. 25:31-46. In connection with that description it is said that in the entire account neither the word "Gospel" nor the word "faith" is used, and consequently we are accused of setting up a wrong standard or norm of judgment. Now, let me invite your careful attention to the reading of this portion: "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory; and before Him shall be gathered all nations. And He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Then shall the righteous answer

Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred and fed Thee? or thirsty and gave Thee drink? When saw we Thee a stranger and took Thee in? or naked and clothed Thee? Or when saw we Thee sick, or in prison and came unto Thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me. Then shall He say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not. Then shall they also answer Him, saying, Lord, when saw we Thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto Thee? Then shall He answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

In these statements of the Judge we have (1) an invitation of the King to those on the right hand to inherit the kingdom; (2) a reference to the good works performed by them in the world; (3) a command to those on the left hand to depart from Him; (4) a reference to their failure to do good works. You will have observed that neither the word "Gospel" nor the word "faith" is used. Are, then, our accusers correct in saying that we establish a norm of judgment which is not written in Matthew 25? No, we still hold that the Judge will be guided in His verdict by the words: "He that believeth . . . shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." But where do we find such a meaning in this account? Those on the right he calls "ye blessed." It would hardly be proper to call them "blessed" if they had arrived before the throne as people who had earned heaven and were now entitled to demand their just reward. He says "ye blessed of *My Father*." So they are now before the Father. But at an earlier time He said: "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). Hence if these souls on the right hand had no faith in Jesus, they would not now be called the "blessed of My Father." Again, when this Son of Man was still on earth, He said: "He that honoreth not

the Son honoreth not the Father which hath sent Him" (John 5:23). He who had no *faith* in the Son certainly could not *honor* the Son. Faith in the Son was an indispensable prerequisite to the title "blessed of My Father." Furthermore He says: "*Inherit* the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." The Judge will award to them the kingdom prepared for them, not by themselves but by Himself, and not as a remuneration for their works but as an inheritance. In the world they "were the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26), "and if children, then heirs," says Paul (Rom. 8:17), "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." An inheritance is not obtained through works. Consequently this entire account confirms us in the fact that the norm for judgment still stands: "He that believeth . . . shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Yet we cannot deny that this account of the Last Judgment lays a great deal of stress on good works, and we are interested to know why. The reason is that works are the outward index of the state of heart and show whether faith is present or not. They exhibit the moral activity of man either as that of souls who are justified by faith or as that of souls who refuse to believe. These works will be viewed not simply according to their outward appearance, as externally the works of believers and of unbelievers often look very much alike. But they will be viewed according to their real inner quality and to the motive from which they have sprung, as St. Paul says 1 Cor. 4:5: "And will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." The works, including the motives back of them, are evidence of the presence or absence of living faith (Stump, *The Christian Faith*, p. 410). The good works of the righteous will bear witness to them that they are their Father's children, and it is proper that they should be in their Father's house, where mansions have been prepared for them. And the evil works of the wicked will testify that, having done the works of *their* father, they are of their father, the devil, and it is meet and right that they should share his abode.

But what of the sins of God's saints? Will not David's adultery and Peter's denial and Paul's persecution of the church of God rise up against them at the Last Day? Will not even the hidden sins of God's children come forth and make them stand ashamed

and publicly disgraced? Will the Judge not possibly read a catalog of your sins and my sins? No. The sins of those on the right hand of Christ will not be permitted to testify in the judgment of the Last Day. The evil works of the believers are not even then brought to light again, because through the believer's justification they have been cast into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). We have God's promise: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Is. 43:25). Everyone who is justified by faith may rest assured that in the Last Judgment the words of Ezek. 18:22 will apply: "All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him." For of him it is said: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32:1), and what God has covered, neither man nor devil shall uncover. Whatever, therefore, may have been our transgressions, if we but abide in Christ by faith, His righteousness will cover all our iniquities, and we may take comfort in the words of St. John: "And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 John 2:28). That is the glorious comfort of those to whom the Lord says, "Your redemption draweth nigh."

There is another item in St. Matthew's account of the Last Judgment which must arrest our attention. Before any statement is made about the judging, we read: "And He shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand but the goats on the left." This indicates that in the mind of the Judge a verdict has been rendered before any judging has taken place. There will be no such thing as a changing of position from the right to the left or from the left to the right. Now, in human courts the guilt or innocence of those who are arraigned before the tribunal of the court is established by the evidence submitted in substantiation or denial of the charge. It is by the evidence, parol or circumstantial, that the facts of the case are made known to the human judge and jury. But there will be no need of evidence of this purpose in the judgment of the Last Day (cp. *Theol. Quart.* 1902, p. 133). This judgment is not an investigation to ascertain who is and who is not a believer; for as "Jesus knew from the beginning

who they were that believed not" (John 6:64), so He also knows those who do believe. "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19). Therefore at the very beginning of the Judgment the sheep are separated from the goats. And consequently we know by the faith we now have where we shall stand on the Last Day. The question of eternal life and eternal death is not decided in the Final Judgment; that is decided by a sinner's conversion to Christ and by his continuance in the faith unto the end. Long before Judgment Day the malefactor on the cross was told: "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). St. John says: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth" (Rev. 14:13). And the Savior Himself said: "He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God" (John 3:18); and John: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:36)

The sentence to be pronounced on Judgment Day is in every case definitely fixed when a man dies. Solomon says: "When a wicked man *dieth*, his expectation shall perish" (Prov. 11:7), and St. John writes: "Be thou faithful unto *death*, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). As far as the soul is concerned, we learn from the malefactor that the sentence is carried out immediately after death. But the sentence is formally and publicly before all nations pronounced and solemnly declared when body and soul are reunited on Judgment Day, and it is extended and applied also to the body on the Day of Judgment (cp. Koehler, *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*, p. 272). What grand truths for all those who today hear our Lord's inviting statement: "Look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

IV. THE END OF THE WORLD

It is only natural that we who shall leave this world and reach eternal redemption should ask: What will happen to the world which we have left behind? The opinion of scoffers is expressed in 2 Peter 3:3, 4: "Where is the promise of His coming? . . . All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." In other words, they hold that this world will stand forever. But

that is not the information given to us in God's inerrant Book, the Bible. In the first place, Scripture definitely speaks of the Last Day. "And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that everyone which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the *Last Day*" (John 6:40, 44). "Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the *Last Day*" (John 11:24). Assuming for a moment that this is the last day (June 17), then we shall have no 18th of June following. And all those events and activities and phenomena which go to make up a day will not occur again. There will be no more rising and setting of the sun, no dawn and no dusk. There will be no more rain and wind and frost and heat. There will be no more radio broadcasts and television shows. Assuming that today is the last day, no trains will begin their scheduled runs and planes their regular flights, no one will leave his home for work tomorrow morning at seven or eight, and we shall have no convention sessions to open at 8:30. All such things cannot happen any longer if today were to be the *last* day.

And not only will the activities of a day cease, but the world itself will come to an end. Our Lord said Matt. 24:14: "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." And again in Matt. 13:39: "The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world." And the Holy Spirit inspired St. Paul to write: "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the Kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." (1 Cor. 15:24)

The end of the world — what does that mean? It means exactly what it says. With the term "world" we indicate the universe, heaven and earth. And of this our Lord says: "Heaven and earth shall pass away" (Luke 21:33). The end of a thing is the termination or ceasing of its existence, and when the end of the world shall come, the world shall cease to exist. In Heb. 1:10f. the apostle quotes Ps. 102:25f. and says: "And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands; they shall perish, but Thou remainest." The psalmist says: "They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure." In Ps. 102:25f. we read: "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of

the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure." Here "to perish" and "to endure" are in contrast, and when heaven and earth are placed into this contrast to God and His endless existence, and it is in this connection said of them that they *shall perish*, the meaning is certainly that they shall not endure, but that their years shall have an end. Hence the world as we know it today with its mountains and valleys and rivers and lakes and oceans, with its sun, moon, and stars, with our factories and skyscrapers, with our homes and churches and schools — this entire world will disappear when our Savior comes to give us our final redemption.

Just how will they disappear? St. Peter says in his Second Letter, 3:5-7: "For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished; but the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men." And in the 10th verse he says: "But the Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Perhaps the most tremendous noise in modern times was heard in 1883, when near Java on Krakatoa Island a volcanic eruption blew a mountain 2,600 feet in height 17 miles into the air, created a submarine cavity 1,000 feet in depth, and caused a detonation that was heard 3,000 miles away. But that event was as nothing compared with the upheaval and cataclysm of the Last Day, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. "Do not ask me what kind of a fire this will be," says Dr. Lenski in his commentary on 2 Peter 3:6. "God has all the varieties of fire that He needs for His purposes: the fire to burn wood, the electric fire of the lightning bolt that strikes in an instant in the sky, the fire that burns in the sun, the fire to change the heavens and the earth at the Last Day, and another most terrible unquenchable fire for the devils and the damned in hell."

"Heaven and earth shall pass away" — does this mean that the entire universe will be completely annihilated and that it will pass entirely into nothing, or does it mean that it will be renovated and given a new form different from what we have now, but that essentially it will remain? The views of expert students of the Bible are divided on this point. Some hold that, as in the beginning the world was created out of nothing, it will on the Last Day be reduced to nothing. They hold that the entire fabric and substance of heaven and earth and of all created things, intelligent creatures alone excepted, will be annihilated and that a new heaven and a new earth will be created out of nothing, as in the beginning. In support of this view they refer to such texts as the following: "Heaven and earth shall pass away" (Luke 21:33). "Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish" (Ps. 102:25). "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind" (Is. 65:17). "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain" (Is. 66:22). "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1). These passages cause a number of theologians to contend that a new heaven and a new earth will be created out of nothing, as in the beginning.

We must certainly admit the possibility of a total annihilation of the very substance of the world, and the creation of a new one. If God could do this once, He can do it a second time. However, God says in Ps. 102:25 about the foundations of the earth: "They shall *perish*." The word "perish" does not necessarily prove annihilation of substance. According to 2 Peter 3:6 the first world perished in water, but its substance was not annihilated, though its "fashion," form, and condition were, no doubt, radically changed. The terms "end of the world" and "pass away" do not necessarily imply that the substance of the world will vanish; they may refer only to the present form and order. St. Paul says 1 Cor. 7:31: "For the fashion of this world passeth away."

Others hold that the "fashion" of this present world will certainly be destroyed by fire, but not its fundamental substance. They believe that from the atoms composing this substance a new heaven and a new earth will be fashioned, even as from the dust of our bodies a new resurrection body will arise. They do not believe in the annihilation of substance but in the renovation of substance; the basic substance from which heaven and earth were made remains, but the fashion, the shape, the size, and condition will be changed. To support this view they point to the text quoted a moment ago: "The fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Cor. 7:31). "The foundation of the earth and the heavens . . . shall perish . . . and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed" (Heb. 1:10-12). They hold that the present universe, which God fashioned during the first six days, will be dissolved into its basic substance, which God created at the beginning from nothing, and that from this substance God will fashion a new heaven and a new earth, entirely different from the present one, large enough for all the saints, one wherein dwelleth righteousness. Thus the original purpose of God's creation will, after all, be consummated.

The difference between these two views may be briefly stated thus: the one holds that the entire universe will by fire be reduced to nothing, and a new heaven and a new earth will be created out of nothing. The second holds that the entire universe will by fire be reduced to its original substance, which God will then refashion into a new heaven and a new earth. That the earth will be destroyed by fire is clearly taught in the Bible. But the Lord has not given us information whether this will result in annihilation or in renovation. (Cp. Koehler, *A Summary*, p. 273)

V. ETERNAL DAMNATION

"Your redemption draweth nigh."—If our eternal redemption were only a removal from the ills of this world into the everlasting happiness of heaven, it would indeed be a marvelous gift of our Lord. But it is more. It is an escape from the endless torments of damnation, which because of our sins we had justly deserved, but from which because of the suffering and death of our Redeemer we have been saved. And so it is profitable that in this connection

we also consider the Scriptural doctrine of damnation so that by means of contrast our final redemption may appear in greater blessedness and glory.

Some years ago a Unitarian wrote: "The idea of a hell is so coarse and so horrible that civilized and well educated people cannot continue to teach such a doctrine" (Guenther, *Symbolik*, p. 420). That view is held by uncounted numbers of people. But with that we do not agree. We say in the Augsburg Confession: "They condemn the Anabaptists, who think that there will be an end to the punishments of condemned men and devils" (*Trigl.*, 51), and in the Apology: "At the consummation of the world Christ shall appear and shall raise up all the dead and shall give to the godly eternal life and eternal joys, but shall condemn the ungodly to be punished with the devil without end" (*Trigl.*, 335). And we teach this because the Word of God teaches it.

In Matt. 18:8, 9 our Savior says: "It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than, having two hands or two feet, to be cast into everlasting fire." Paul wrote to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 1:7-9): "And to you who are troubled, rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." On the Last Day the sentence of condemnation will be: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," and this sentence will immediately be carried out: "and these shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:41, 46). Having risen to shame and everlasting contempt, those on the left of the Judge will have no share in the glory and honor which awaits the righteous in the company of the holy angels. In this world the Lord had warned them: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). Reaping now the fruits of what they have sown, it is proper that they should stand disgraced. Even in this present world and life, sin and crime bring shame and disgrace upon those who have committed them. Many a man or woman has preferred death to the humiliation of having to bear this retribution for sin or crime in the eyes of friends and enemies. It is disgracing in the

present life to be associated with criminals and vile companions. It will be similar after the sentence has been passed. "It will be a part of the just retribution of the damned that they will be confined in close companionship not only with the very scum and dregs of mankind, but with the unclean spirits, the devil and his angels, the murderer from the beginning, the liar and the father of it, and all his infernal host" (*Theol. Quart.*, VI [1902], 140). But we say, Misery loves company. Even among the lowest criminal element in our country friendship develops and compensates at least to a slight extent for the misery they are in. Will some such sympathetic companionship not develop among the condemned in hell? No. God says: "And they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." (Is. 66:24)

But hell is also a place of torment. The rich man in hell says while speaking of his five brethren: "Lest they also come into this place of torment" (Luke 16:28). And in the same chapter (vv. 23-25) we read: "And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." Again our Lord says: "But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:12). St. John says in Rev. 20:10: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." In the Old Testament Isaiah said (66:24): "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." And Rev. 14:10, 11 warns: "The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever; and they have no rest day nor night."

In this life sin may bring shame upon the sinner and fines and imprisonment and lash and chains and hard labor and loathsome and painful disease. But it may also, and it does frequently, bring pleasure to the sinner, the pleasures of the drunkard and the adulterer, of the gambler and the miser and the robber, of the vengeful murderer and the iron-fisted tyrant. But in hell there will be no such sinful pleasures. There will be only torment, no comfort, no rest, not a drop of water to cool the parched and burning tongue. And this excruciating and ceaseless torment will be inflicted upon both soul and body in hell. Jesus says: "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt. 10:28). The body includes also the members of the body. St. Paul says (Rom. 6:12) that the sinner yields his members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin. The sinner uses his hands, his eyes, his feet, etc., as instruments with which he commits sin. In hell, therefore, the body, the eyes, ears, tongue, hands, and feet that served the soul in sin and shared the pleasures and profits of sinful pursuits will be made to share the loss, to suffer the fearful penalty of pain and torment.

Yet in view of all this, hell would not be hell if it admitted of one thing — hope. But hell is hopeless. Over its portals, figuratively speaking, are written the words: "Abandon hope, all ye that enter here." Of all those on the left of the Judge it is said: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46). Of them "that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" St. Paul says: "Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess. 1:9). In the Old Testament Daniel wrote (12:2): "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake . . . some to shame and everlasting contempt." Of those who are cast into hell-fire, Jesus says: "Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:48)

While in each case the torment in hell is terrible beyond conception, there will be varying degrees of punishment. There will be a difference between the damnation of Judas Iscariot and Pontius Pilate. Great was the sin and guilt of the unjust judge Pilate, who knowingly condemned an innocent man to a malefactor's death. But greater was the sin and guilt of Judas the apostle,

of Annas and Caiaphas, of whom Jesus said to Pilate: "He that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin" (John 19:11). There are degrees of sin, one sin being more heinous than another, murder and rape more atrocious than theft and fraud. And there are degrees of guilt, not only in proportion to the nature of the sin committed but also in consideration of the responsibility of the sinner. Judas the apostle of Christ and Caiaphas the high priest of Israel were in a higher degree responsible for what they did than Pilate was for his sinful acts. In Matt. 11:21f. our Savior says: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment than for you." And He makes a similar statement of Capernaum and Sodom. Tyre and Sidon, Sodom and Gomorrah, were wicked cities, but they had not heard the voice of Jesus and had not rejected the message carried by His apostles, as Bethsaida and Chorazin and Capernaum. Hence it shall be more tolerable for them in the Day of Judgment. And that is the reason for Christ's announcement to the scribes and Pharisees: "Ye shall receive the greater damnation" (Matt. 23:14). And with reference to varying degrees of punishment, Christ made this statement: "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." (Luke 12:47, 48)

So, then, the eternal punishment of the lost will be complete and so unutterable that human language lacks terms adequate to describe it. The damned will be forever excluded from the presence of God, who is the Source of all light and love, and from the society of all those who love God and do His will. They will be in the society of the devils and the most wicked of men, and in darkness, hatred, bitterness, lamentations, and hopeless despair. There will be the hatred against God, the anguish of conscience, and the bitter, never-ending consciousness that they might be in

heaven, but are in hell of their own choice. Here in the world, in spite of their rebellious nature, God looked down upon them with kindness and compassion and daily permitted them to enjoy His manifold blessings. But in hell they will no longer experience divine favors of any kind. In fact, this is the very essence of damnation, that they will be forever forsaken of God; and everlastingly they will endure the unmitigated violence of His wrath, as it was foretold in Nah. 1:2: "The Lord revengeth and is furious; the Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies." They are now left to reap what they have sown, to be themselves a part of that indescribable horror which is called hell.

This everlasting fire was not originally prepared for these lost souls. The Judge says: "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). Why, then, are they there? The Savior gave the answer in short simple terms: "He that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16). And in John 3:36 we read: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." (Cp. Eph. 5:6; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10; Rev. 22:15.)

This is the damnation which you and I have justly deserved for our transgressions of God's holy Law. This is the damnation from which our Savior has purchased and won us with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. This is the damnation from which we shall forever escape when our redemption draweth nigh. That guarantee is given us in the words of our blessed Redeemer Himself: "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the *righteous into life eternal.*" (Matt. 25:46)

VI. ETERNAL LIFE

The moment our gracious Redeemer says: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" — from that moment on we shall have a perfect fulfillment of the Savior's promise, "Your redemption draweth nigh." Then our redemption will be there, perfect, final, and complete. — During these days we have repeatedly used the term "redemption." What is the definition of this word? It means, according to the original language in which it was first used, a deliverance or

liberation procured by the payment of a ransom, a buying free from everything that is evil. Redemption is a riddance of something brought on by sin, and it implies a buying loose through the action of another. Our final redemption is the liberation, effected by Christ, from all sin and its consequences. It is the perfect separation of body and soul from everything that is evil. And when that separation has taken place, then we are with God Himself in heaven.

In heaven there will be no sin. Paul wrote to Timothy when he was looking forward to his departure from this life: "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Tim. 4:8). Peter speaks of heaven as "an inheritance incorruptible and *undefiled* and that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 1:4). In the Epistle to the Hebrews the saints in heaven are described as "just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). In Rev. 3:12 the Lord Jesus says: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out." What a contrast between this world and our heavenly home! Here sins abound; there holiness and righteousness prevail. Here everyone sins; there no one sins. Here we are surrounded by all manner of temptation to sin; there every temptation will be forever removed. Here even the Christian is compelled to confess: "The good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do" (Rom. 7:19); there we shall have not even the slightest inclination to sin. Here sin causes us to lament: "Oh, wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24); there perfection will permeate our whole being. What a glorious prospect! No sin, no imperfection, not the least taint or moral corruption! When we have entered our final redemption, we shall be in a place of sinlessness. Heaven's inhabitants will be perfectly holy and without blemish.

Being free from sin in that redemption, we shall be free from every consequence of sin, especially from every pain of this earthly existence. Who can adequately describe the pains and heartaches and sorrows of man in this life? This world is at best nothing but a vale of tears. As you walk along the streets of our cities, as you pass through our hospitals and charitable institutions, as you read the columns of our daily papers, you are confirmed in the conviction that there is endless misery and woe in the world. The

poor clamor for food and raiment, the blind grope in darkness, the sick are stretched out on their bed of misery, the crippled are deprived of the use of the members of the body, worry drives many to an untimely grave. But now note how the Bible describes the absence of all these evils in heaven. In Rev. 21:4 we read: "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." John writes in Rev. 7:16: "They shall hunger no more neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them nor any heat." And already the believers of the Old Testament were given this beautiful prospect: "He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces" (Is. 25:8). "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Is. 35:10). "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them" (Is. 49:10). And once more: "For the Lord shall be thine everlasting Light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Is. 60:20). What a grand promise for all cross-bearers: "And the days of thy mourning shall be ended"!

As there will be no sin any more in our final redemption, there will be no death nor any fear of death. "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15:54). St. Paul gives us the assurance: "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26). John writes Rev. 21:4: "And there shall be no more death." In fact, as saints in heaven we shall be beyond the possibility of dying; for Jesus tells us Luke 20:36: "Neither *can* they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." What a grand deliverance! No sin, no pain of any kind, no death in heaven! When the Christian has closed his eyes in death here upon earth, he has taken farewell from these his enemies forever. All this is ours in the Savior's promise: "Your redemption draweth nigh."

Some years ago a writer gave expression to his conception of an ideal heaven, and he wrote the following: "And when he (the pilgrim) has traveled many, many leagues and has found it — a spot not too sunny nor too deeply shaded, where the old fallen dead leaves and dry moss have formed a thick soft couch to recline on and a gray exposed root winding over the earth offers a rest to his back — there at length he will settle himself. There he will

remain motionless and contented forever in that remote desert land where is no sound of singing bird nor of running water nor of rain or wind in the gray ancient trees; waking and sleeping he will rest there, dreaming little and thinking less, while year by year and age by age the memory of the world of passion and striving of which he was so unutterably tired grows fainter and fainter in his mind. And he will have neither joy nor sorrow, nor love nor hate, nor wish to know them any more; and when he remembers his fellow men it will comfort him to think that his peace will never be broken by the sight of human face or the sound of human speech, since never by any chance will any wanderer from the world discover him in that illimitable wilderness." *

What a wretched heaven compared with that which our Triune God has prepared for us! The heaven which God has in prospect for us is not only a place where we shall be delivered from all evil, but also a place of unspeakable joy. In Ps. 16:11 we read: "In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." The prophet Isaiah writes (35:10): "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." The Lord Jesus once said to His disciples (Luke 6:21): "Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh." The psalmist refers to this same joy of heaven which we shall experience after the sorrows of this life when he exclaims in Ps. 126:5, 6: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." The tears of God's children here are followed by laughter there. Our mouth will be filled with laughter and our tongue with singing. Even here we rejoice when we think of God's unmerited kindness and the unspeakable grace which He has bestowed upon us through Christ, our Savior. But this our joy is too often mingled with sadness and marred by sin. In heaven, however, there will be "fullness of joy," joy complete.

* From "Pilgrims at the Land's End," by W. H. Hudson in *Essays of Our Times*, published by W. J. Gage and Company, Limited, Toronto. Quoted here by kind permission of the original publishers, J. M. Dent & Sons [Canada] Limited, Toronto.

In what will this joy consist when we have entered our final redemption? John writes: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for *we shall see Him as He is*" (1 John 3:2). We shall see God. What joy unspeakable, to see Him face to face who loved us with an everlasting love, who provided for us a way of salvation through His own dear Son, and who graciously kept us in that faith unto the end, so that we have received the crown of life! Who can begin to describe the joy that will fill our hearts when, basking in the sunshine of God's presence, we shall be permitted to thank and praise Him forevermore for His marvelous grace toward us children of men? Job exultantly rejoices when speaking of his resurrection: "In my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:26). And the apostle John describes the chief joy of the saints in heaven when he says of them: "And God Himself shall be with them and be their God" (Rev. 21:3). God will be the Source of endless joy; in Him there is nothing to call forth sadness or any unhappiness; therefore to be in His presence will afford an unending bliss.

Furthermore, our joy in heaven will consist in seeing Jesus. Paul assures us: "And so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). Jesus Himself prays: "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am" (John 17:24). And when we have arrived in our heavenly home, "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe," says St. Paul (2 Thess. 1:10). We shall admire our precious Savior, we shall marvel at Him. No wonder that Paul says: "Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23). What a thrilling experience it will be to meet Jesus face to face, to talk to Jesus, and to thank Jesus for His undying love! (Cp. *Heaven*, by George Beiderwieden, pp. 19ff.)

All these joys shall be ours in our final redemption, in that place which Scripture calls heaven. Heaven is a place of entrancing beauty, of matchless splendor, of indescribable glory. It is the habitation of God, the capital of the King of Glory, the Father's house, the place where Jesus has gone to prepare a mansion for us, the holy city. The apostle John, who was carried away in the spirit and permitted to view "that great city, the holy Jerusalem,"

gives us an authentic and, at the same time, a most enchanting description of heaven in Revelation 21. He writes (vv. 11-27): "Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall, great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the Children of Israel: on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city and the gates thereof and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth; and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper. And the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life."

No human author has ever succeeded in describing the splendor, the grandeur, the significance, of heaven so eloquently and graph-

ically as the God-inspired apostle John in the passage just quoted. While this description is given in language taken from the glory and splendor of earth, it serves to indicate that the glories of the heavenly home are beyond our highest powers of conception. Heaven, the place of our redemption, is, according to the Bible, a place of exquisite beauty. There our joy will be an everlasting joy, our glory, eternal glory, our inheritance an eternal inheritance, our crown a crown of glory that fadeth not away. There will be neither fear nor hope in the world to come; no fear, because there will be no possibility of future evil. And no hope, because there will be no future blessings to be desired and expected, since we shall have and hold and possess and enjoy to perfect satisfaction and forever the inheritance of the saints in light.

Heaven is furthermore a place where the Lord will remember the promise of gracious rewards. In Rev. 14:13 the Lord says: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their *works do follow them.*" The Lord does not say that their works will precede them in order to prepare or purchase a place for them in heaven. That has fully been accomplished by Christ; and we must not purchase or earn, but inherit the kingdom prepared for us. But the works of every heir of salvation, which he has done in this life, shall follow him to the life beyond. Not his evil works; for they are cast into the depth of the sea, blotted out, never to be remembered. But of his good works, not one shall be forgotten, not even the cup of cold water given to one of Christ's little ones in the name of a disciple. Jesus says: "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matt. 10:42; cp. Mark 9:41). And it shall not only be mentioned unto him, but, says the Lord, "he shall in no wise lose his reward." Christ will make good His promise. In Rev. 22:12 we read: "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his works shall be." Here we sow; there we shall reap as we shall have sown. "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6). Thus there shall be degrees of glory in the Kingdom of Glory. Yet the greater

glory of the one shall not be a cause of envy, but a source of joy to the other. Neither shall they whose crown shall shine with brighter gems exalt themselves; but everyone shall say: "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." (Ps. 126:3)

That, my brethren, is the place of glory which our blessed Savior promises to us in the word: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." (Luke 21:28)

VII. CONCLUSION

"And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh!" What a grand, what a heavenly, what a ravishing message of Him who loves us from eternity to eternity! Perhaps a number of us came to this convention with fear-filled, grief-stricken, gloom-ridden hearts. But why the fear? Why the grief? Why the gloom? Is there any cause for such dejection, even in the last hours of this dying world, when our blessed Redeemer gives us the magnificent promise: "Your redemption draweth nigh"? Let us banish all doubt and fear! Let us go home with joy and rejoicing! Let us return to our respective fields of labor and spend the rest of our days, not in monkish seclusion, but with bold determination to work in the kingdom of the Lord as we have never worked before, so that we may win an ever larger number to accompany us into our eternal redemption. Let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:1, 2). Let us make sure that we and all the members of our family are fellow pilgrims on the way to the New Jerusalem. Let us earnestly seek the salvation of every individual dearly redeemed soul in our congregations and mission parishes. Let us labor with a holy zeal and a buoyant, untiring enthusiasm for all those who, at home and abroad, are still among the unchurched, so that they, too, may be guests with us at the wedding feast of the Lamb. And when that redemption is finally revealed to us in all its glory and perfection, then shall we join the multitudinous hosts of heavenly choirs in that new song of Zion: "Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals

thereof; for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation and hast made us unto our God kings and priests. . . . Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing. . . . Blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever." (Rev. 5:9-13)

Soli Deo Gloria!
