

This right was so much abused that it was confined to a few places and its limits rigidly defined. The right of sanctuary hospitality may be demanded of any chief by a fugitive Arab to-day, and his host is bound to protect him until he has been tried, and to avenge his death if his appeal be not heeded. In England, in the Middle Ages, the right of

asylum possessed by many churches seriously interfered with the administration of justice. The Cities of Refuge were an adaptation of a custom of the time; they were within easy reach of the whole land; their elders were the wisest men in Israel; they regulated the rude justice of the age, and substituted judicial investigation for personal vengeance.

APPLICATION

By Rev. Professor E. A. Mackenzie, B.D., Montreal

Cities of refuge, v. 2. Shelter is suggestive of storm. We should not need places of refuge, but for the danger of being buffeted and beaten by tempest. And what a storm it was from which the manslayer fled! The fierce rage of the "goel", the avenger of blood, was pursuing him. It was a sweet moment when his foot pressed the threshold of the gate of the city where he was safe. The gospel points us to a shelter from God's wrath against sin. Christ is our City of Refuge; and the more urgently the gospel urges us to seek shelter in Christ, the more clearly does the greatness of our peril away from Him appear.

Manslayer. *unawares and unwittingly*, v. 3. "God cares more for adverbs than verbs", said a preacher. A verb expresses the mere doing of an act, while an adverb points to the motive, the purpose, the manner of the act. Saul, offering sacrifices of the sheep and oxen he had taken in battle, seemed to be doing a good and praiseworthy thing. But the Lord, and Samuel, the Lord's prophet, knew the rebellious heart and the disobedient will in which this pretended worship had its source, and the king was unsparingly condemned (1 Sam. 15: 22). We may cheat men as to the real springs of our actions; but God's vision reaches the heart, and there is no deceiving Him.

Refuge from the avenger of blood, v. 3. Says Canon Tristram, "On the chief door of Durham Cathedral still remains the great bronze knocker, which, if any fugitive should touch, he was entitled to protection and maintenance for thirty-seven days, until his case could be investigated. This custom, which lasted

down through the Middle Ages, beautifully illustrates the way in which we find refuge in Christ. The way is so simple and plain any one can find it. It is just the touch of the hand, the look of the eye, the trust of the heart, that brings us into the peace and joy of His salvation.

Take him into the city...give him a place, v. 4. There are people who are color blind, so that red or green to them is gray. Sometimes the color-blindness is in the mind and heart, and God is thought to be stern and hard, quickly ready to condemn men. The truth, all the while, is that He is infinitely eager to save men, to make the best and most of them, to give them a second chance when they go astray. The Old Testament City of Refuge was first meant to give the unwitting manslayer a second chance. The cross of Jesus Christ offers a second chance to all men. All the guilty past may be covered over with His blood, and on the white pages of the future, by His grace, may be written better and nobler deeds.

Shall not deliver the manslayer up, v. 5. Between the man slayer and the avenger was the closed gate of the city and the refusal of its rulers to give up their charge. But far stronger and more enduring is the barrier that keeps the believer in Jesus Christ from harm. This is nothing less than the omnipotence of God's divine Son. "Father", said He, "I will that they be with Me where I am". And there is no power in the whole universe which can break through that will, or destroy those protected by its purpose and power.

Stand for judgment, v. 6. God is merciful beyond the measure of human language or

Shelter from
the Storm

Verbs and
Adverbs

Only to touch
the Knocker

A Second
Chance

An Unbroken
Barrier