1 Corinthians - Commentaries by William Kelly

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 9:15-27, Notes in

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The apostle had now affirmed the principle. It was for others however, not for himself. He is careful to make this understood by the Corinthians. He had written in love for the glory of the Lord, “but,” says he, “I have used none of these things. And I have not written these things that it should be thus in my case, for [it were] good for me to die rather than that any one should make vain my boast. For if I preach the gospel I have nothing to boast, for necessity is laid upon me, for woe is to me if I preach not the gospel. For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if I unwillingly, I have an administration entrusted to me.” (Vers. 15-17.) Divine love cares for others, and sacrifices self. The apostle was the living exemplification of the gospel he preached. There were rights, and grace does not forget them for others—does not avail itself of them. He is even warm in repudiating any such thought in the present case. It was living Christ so to feel and act, who taught that it was more blessed to give than to receive. His own life and death were the fullness of its truth; but the apostle was no mean witness of it, though a man of like passions with us. Nor has he been without his imitators in this, even as he also was of Christ. He would not afford a handle to those who sought it at Corinth. Others have had grounds equally grave for a similar course.

It is important to see also that to preach is not a thing to boast of. It is an obligation—a duty to Him who has called one, and conferred a gift for this very purpose. It is thus a necessity laid on all such, not an office of honor to claim, nor a right to plead. Christ has the right to send, and He does send, laborers into His vineyard. This makes it truly a necessity laid on him who is sent. According to scripture, the church never sends any to preach the gospel. Relations are falsified by any such pretension. Again He who sends directs the laborer. It is of capital importance that this should be maintained with immediate responsibility to the Lord. Therefore it is that the apostle adds, “For woe is to me if I preach not the gospel.” Undoubtedly, he who does this voluntarily has a reward, and the heart goes with the blessed work, whatever the hardness and reproach which accompany it. But if not of one's own will, an administration, or stewardship, is entrusted to one. Now of the steward it is sought that a man be found faithful.

“What then is my reward? That in preaching the gospel I may make the gospel without charge. So that I use not for myself any authority in the gospel.” (Ver. 18.) It was meet that such an one as the apostle, extraordinarily called, should act in extraordinary grace; and this he does. He made the gospel without cost to others, at all cost to himself. He did not use his right to a support for himself. It is no question here of “abuse,” any more than in chapter vii. 31. It is the giving up of one's right for special reasons of grace, and it is the more beautiful in one who had as deep a sense of righteousness as any man, perhaps, who ever lived. The plea for the rights of others was therefore so much the more unimpeachable, because it was absolutely unmixed with any desire for himself.

"For being free from all, I made myself bondman to all, that I might gain the most. And I became to the Jews as a Jew, that I might gain Jews; and to those under law, as under law, not being myself under law,1 that I might gain those under law; to those without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain those without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak; to all I have become all things, that by all means I might save some. And all things I do for the sake of the gospel, that I may become a fellow partaker of it.” (Vers. 19-23.) How bright a reflection of the spirit of the gospel! The apostle was ready to yield at every side where Christ was not concerned. He was free, but free to be a bondman of any and everyone, in order that he might gain, not ends of his own, but the most possible for Christ. Hence among the Jews he raised no question about Judaism. His heart was set on their salvation; he would not be turned aside by legal questions. He became as a Jew; but while he declares that to those under law he was as under law, he carefully guards his own standing in grace by the clause left out in so many of the more modern copies, “not being myself under law,” that he might gain those under it. Such was the only gain he sought—not theirs, but them; and them for God, not to mold after any opinions or prejudices of his own.

He was just the same with the Gentiles. (Compare Gal. 4:12.) Such is the elasticity of grace. “To those without law, as without law,” while he carefully adds, not being without law to God, but duly or legitimately subject to Christ, that he might gain those without law. It is in vain to speak of natural character or education. If there ever was a soul rigidly bound by Pharisaic tradition within the straitest limits, it was Saul of Tarsus. But if any man be in Christ, there is a new creation. The old things passed; behold they are become new. Such was Paul the apostle; and so he lived, labored, and speaks to us livingly. He would not wound the scruples of the feeblest; nay, to the weak he became weak, that he might gain the weak; in short, he could, and does, say, “to all I am become all things, that I may by all means save some.” It was not, as some basely misuse his words, to excuse tampering with the world, and so spare one's own flesh, which is really to become the prey of Satan. His was self-sacrifice in a faith which had only Christ for its object, and the bringing of every soul within one's reach into contact with His love.

"Know ye not that they who run in a racecourse run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And everyone that contendeth is temperate in all things. They indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, as not uncertainly—so combat, as not beating air. But I buffet my body, and lead [it] captive, lest by any means, having preached to others, I myself should be reprobate.” (Vers. 24-27.) The figure from these games would be most striking to the Corinthians accustomed to those of the Isthmus. Indeed, the use is plain to anyone. Spiritually, the prize is not for one, but for all, if all ran well. But even in the games the candidates must be temperate in all things, though theirs were but a fading crown, ours an everlasting.

The apostle then applies it with touching beauty, not to the faulty Corinthians, but to himself. His was no rhetoric of the schools or the law courts, but of Christ for heaven. He therefore transfers the application to himself for their sakes, if I may apply his own language in chapter 4. “I therefore so run as not uncertainly.” How was it with them? I “so combat, as not beating air.” To this alas! they were habitually prone, as the epistle shows throughout, especially chapters 14 and 15. “But I buffet my body, and lead it captive, lest by any means, having preached to others, I myself should be reprobate."

Would that the Corinthians had so dealt with themselves! Alas! they were reigning as kings, while the apostles were, as it were, appointed to death. It is an utter mistake to suppose that the language of the apostle supposes any fear of perdition for his own soul. He had grave fears for those who were living at ease and carelessly. It is very possible for a man to preach to others, and be lost himself; but such an one does not buffet the body, nor bring it into subjection. Had the apostle lived without conscience, he must have assuredly been lost, as indeed one of the twelve was. Here we are shown the inseparable connection between a holy walk along the way, and eternal life at the end of it. Who can doubt it? and why should any man make a difficulty in the passage? There would be difficulty indeed, if the apostle spoke of having been born again and afterward becoming a castaway. In this case life would not be eternal. But he says nothing of the sort. He only shows the solemn danger and certain ruin of preaching without a practice according to it. This the Corinthians needed to hear then, as we to weigh now. Preaching or teaching truth to men without reality, self-judgment, and self-denial before God, is ruinous. It is to deceive ourselves, not Him who is not mocked.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 9:1-14, Notes on

The apostle now enters on the vindication of his office which some in Corinth had sought to undermine and of ministry in general which they tended to corrupt. Title is asserted, but with full room for grace. For ministry is of Christ the Lord, not of the first man, and the spirit of man or of the world if allowed is its ruin.

“Am I not free?1 am I not an apostle?2 have I not seen Jesus our Lord? my work are not ye in [the] Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, yet at least I am to you; for the seal of my apostleship ye are in [the] Lord. My defense to those that examine me is this. Have we not authority to eat and drink? have we not authority to take about a sister wife, as also the other apostles and the brethren of the Lord and Cephas? or I alone and Barnabas, have we not authority to abstain from working [lit. not to work]?” (Vers. 16.)

Most strongly had he declared his readiness to give up anything for natural life rather than jeopardize his brother. Yet does he affirm his independence of human yoke as distinctly as his apostleship. Liberty thus went hand in hand with the highest responsibility. Nor was his office vague or secondary. He had seen Jesus our Lord. His detractors were thus far right: he had derived no degree from the apostolic college, no mission from Jerusalem. From the twelve others might pretend to succession, and falsely: Paul had his authority immediately from the Lord seen on high. Were the Corinthians the men to question this?—the “much people” whom the Lord had in that city? whom Paul had begotten through the gospel? Was this their love in the Spirit? If not an apostle to others, surely such should not deny it who were its seal in the Lord. But what may not the saint do or say who slips out of the Lord's presence? Too, too like Jeremiah's figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil. In none is evil worse than in the Christian. The corruption of the best thing is not the least corruption. Was it come to this, that Paul was put on his trial, on the preliminary inquiry at least, to see whether an action would lie against him, and that he had to make his plea or speech in defense to his own Corinthian children in the faith? He then asserts the title of an apostle, as we may say too in general of him who ministers in the word, and here in the gospel particularly. “Have we not authority to eat and drink?” that is, right to maintenance. “Have we not authority to take about a sister wife, as also the other apostles and the brethren in the Lord and Cephas?” that is, not only to marry a sister but to introduce her where he himself went, an object of loving care to the saints with himself. So it was with the apostles in general, notably with the Lord's brethren or kinsmen and above all with Peter. (See Matt. 8:14.) “Or I only and Barnabas, have we not authority not to work?” This is the alternative ordinarily where support is not given. But the saints should never take advantage of the grace that foregoes such a title to relax in their own plain and positive duty. To cut off the plausible self-seeking of false apostles who wished to ingratiate themselves and to insinuate evil against the true, the apostle did not use his title, especially at Corinth, but wrought with his own hands, as it would seem Barnabas did also. But he is careful to lay down as unquestionable the title of the spiritual workman to a living for himself and his family.

Very fittingly does this follow his exhortation in the preceding chapter, where he reproves such an use of liberty as might stumble the weak. It was certainly not so with him who did not even use his right to support when in their midst; so had he done as to marriage (1 Cor. 7)3 through all his career in order to serve the Lord the more undividedly; even as he could tell the Ephesian elders at a later day how they themselves knew that his hands had ministered to his wants and the wants of those who were with him, and had shown them everyway that so toiling we ought to come in aid of the weak and call to mind the words of the Lord Jesus, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

But he proceeds to show that even nature teaches better than to neglect those who serve the Lord in His saints or gospel. “Whoever serveth in war at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of its fruit? or who tendeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Do I speak these things as a man, or doth not the law also say these things? For in the law of Moses it is written, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that is treading out corn. Is it for the oxen that God careth, or doth he say it altogether on our account? For it was written on our account, because the plower ought to plow in hope and the thresher in hope of partaking. If we sowed for you the spiritual things, [is it] a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others partake of the authority over you, should not we more? But we used not this authority, but bear all things that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of the Christ. Know ye not that those that minister about the holy things eat of the temple and those that attend the altar share with the altar? So also the Lord ordained those that announce the gospel to live of the gospel.” (Vers. 7-14).

All live on the return of their work, soldier, husbandman, shepherd. The propriety of this, according to man, is unimpeachable: did the law of God speak otherwise? It is even stronger in the same direction; and if He spoke of not muzzling the ox when treading out corn, He had not cattle in view but His people, His servants in the word. The figure is kept up accurately. The plower ought to plow in hope, and the thresher (ought to thresh) in hope of partaking, the last phrase being more appropriate when the time for a share was obviously near.

There is also, it may be well to notice, in verse 11 a guard against him who would object that the analogy falls, in that the laborer thus specified received in kind, whereas the spiritual laborer might need help in the things of this life. The apostle meets the senseless or selfish cavil by showing the duty of a recompense a fortiori, as what is of the Spirit transcends what is of flesh. If we for you sowed the spiritual, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal?” He appeals in verse 12 to their own practice as owning the title of others. “If others partake of the authority over you, should not we more?” He takes care however to show that he was wholly above selfish aims in thus pleading for the spiritual laborer and his title to support: “Yet we used not this authority, but bear all things that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of

the Christ.” He would plead for others and their title, and the duty of the saints ministered to on a right consideration of the work done; but he used not the right for himself, on the contrary bearing all sorts of trial in order to afford no hindrance to the gospel.

Lastly the apostle draws a testimony from the Levitical system in contrast as it is in many respects with the gospel, in that it identified the ministrants with what was brought into the temple and laid on the altar. Jehovah being the part and inheritance of the priestly name among the sons of Israel, He gave them a share in His offerings and sacrifices. So now under the gospel the Lord forgets not those who preach it but appoints them to derive their maintenance from it, though there may be exceptional cases as in his who has written the rule for us.

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There is nothing that characterizes fallen man more than the love of change. In an unfallen state there was not even a desire for it, had it been possible. And the very reverse will characterize the rest of glory, that “rest which remaineth for the people of God.” But, in the meantime, one sees man trying to find in change a relief from his misery, to drown all serious thoughts by a continual recourse to some new thing, some fresh effort, some novel experiment. This is so true that certain sages of this world define happiness to be change! Could they really condemn themselves more? They thereby show that they have no knowledge of God; for, as God Himself is the Unchanging One, so He brings His people to know even now peace with Him; yea, a state of calm settled blessedness, of repose for the spirit, of rest in His love, His peace, that would be utterly ruined by the suspicion of a change. They thus tell their own sad tale, that they are far from God, that they taste a misery which is not in any wise done with, but only concealed by constant fluctuation, if peradventure they might find—I will not say comfort, but—forgetfulness of their sorrow. Such is the estate of man fallen: nothing more dismal; and men are afraid to face it: else they might look out of all these shifts of wretchedness to the Unchanging One, Who can change all things for us, and Who so does through His own Son, to give us a blessedness which does not change.

Nor is it only men of the world that we see thus ensnared: Christians are apt to be affected by the thoughts of the age, of those around them. Among the Christians of the New Testament none show this more than the saints at Corinth. The reason is plain. They still admired the refined world and its opinions; and they were, therefore, more or less drawn into the feelings and ways of the world. This appears not only elsewhere, but in that which gave occasion for the apostolic teaching in this part of the chapter. We can understand it well. The condition of a slave (and he was writing about slaves) in those days was no doubt distressing. Take a heathen master, where there was the grossest moral degradation, with Christian slaves, men or women; these could scarcely escape the sight and sound of most defiling communications, they must over be exposed to that which was irreconcilably opposed to the purity of new life in Christ. One can understand how natural the desire might be, in the heart of a slave to be delivered from such a state of things; but to set the heart on a deliverance of this kind is the very thing the apostle here rebukes. He would not have it made an object. Prayer was a different thing, if it might please God to present a door of escape; but the general principle, as laid down by him, points in the contrary direction—to abide as they had been called. And this is said expressly to those who were in the condition of bondage. But it is revealed for their comfort, that God has introduced in the Lord Jesus a principle and a power superior to any and all circumstances in ourselves or around us. Now, our faith is meant to bow to this as God's word for us; and, therefore, the cultivation or allowance of desires for shifting our circumstances is clearly opposed to faith. The duty of a Christian is subjection to God where he is; it is indeed more—confidence in His present interest and affection, in His willingness to direct and to order all for us. May we not detect in ourselves such restlessness that we really treat God as if He paid no heed, nor loved us—at least in our actual circumstances and present relationships on earth? What utter unbelief, and this in believers!

But the apostle takes up these questions of the Corinthians, in order to bring out the mind of God, and to give us divine counsel, while passing through such a scene as this. Therefore he lays down in a few brief words the principle— “Art thou called, being a slave (for such was the “servant” here)? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.” The utmost sobriety prevails. There is no such extreme view as speculative minds have imported into the phrase, that the Christian had better remain a slave, even if he could be free. Such a dream might commend itself perhaps to the student in his comfortable library, but certainly not if he knew practically what slavery meant, especially in heathen times, and for Christians above all. “Let it not be a care to thee:” he must not treat the Lord as if He did not look upon the one He loved, nor enter into his sorrows and condition; let him believe that it was He who ordered all. It is His to arrange, ours to obey; for does it become the soldier in the field of battle to choose for himself what he shall do? Or is it a great matter that he should understand why one or another is put in any post of danger?

To dispose of each rests with the one who commands.

Now there can be no doubt of Christ's love or wisdom, Who brings in what is entirely above all questions, what grace alone could conceive, and what grace now confers. Hence it is of all consequence that we should see the present power of the truth of God; for it is now that we walk by faith, now that we need its comfort and strength. Surely we shall have the results of the divine purpose forever on high; but it is now above all that we need to walk in the faith of His grace, saying, in the hope of the glory, “The slave called in the Lord is the Lord's freedman; likewise the freeman called is the Lord's slave” (verse 22). Here we have a blessed pointing out of the relationships of the believer, and this, too, in the true moral order for the soul. It is not first, you observe, that we are Christ's servants; we are the Lord's freemen; indeed, one is a little more, “the Lord's freedman” —he that was a slave, but is a, slave no longer. The Lord's “freedman” is a word not used elsewhere, that I recollect, in the. New Testament.

“Likewise also the freeman that was called is Christ's slave.” He is speaking now of the man whose position and circumstances seemed outwardly so much fairer. But he is Christ's slave. Now it is well to point out, as far as the Lord enables me, the force and the connection of this twofold place. For it is not merely that one applies to the slave and the other to the freeman. I shall endeavor to show that both are true to every saint, and to show, too, what they are as connected with the mighty work of our Lord Jesus; for it is of the greatest consequence to see every privilege having its root in the grace of God, and all revealed in the word of God, and all centering in the person and work of Christ.

Now there are confessedly difficulties on the subject, and they have been felt so long and widely that one cannot but desire for God's children generally a clearer view of the truth: especially as growth in divine things depends on a fuller perception of Christ and His work by the Holy Spirit's use of the written word. God has always so ordered it that the soul is led into the truth by the Holy Spirit, Who will not act apart from the glory of the Lord Jesus. He may use means if He please; but every attempt to perpetuate truth in the abstract is vain. Apart from Christ it

cannot be truly known. There is something exceedingly gracious of God in it, because in this way He keeps up the freshness of the truth far His saints. He does not permit it to become a science, which is in fact what theology is and boasts to be. But where, when, ever did a soul drink of the living water in those dry beds? Let me then point out the difference between what scripture calls being “bought” or purchased, as distinct from “redeemed.” It is a familiar fact that the words of the Spirit are not really the same, though frequently confounded in our justly prized English Bible. The translators seem never to have suspected that there was any substantial distinction; and the mass of expositors and preachers have followed in their wake.

Take for instance Rev. 5:9, “redeemed us to God.” Here it is , the word, not for redemption, but for purchase; and compare chap. 14:3, 4. It is, “Thou hast bought us to God.” In our chapter it is translated aright, as in 1 Cor. 6:20. The word “bought” does not mean redeem; but so thoroughly had these two thoughts been identified in the minds of Christians generally that even the difference was quite ignored by the two parties who stand most opposed to one another, as they have been for 1400 years. I refer to the old Pelagian struggle in the fifth century (between those who contended for grace in God to meet the sinner's ruin, and those who held up man's ability to please and serve God if he liked), or, when you come down to later times, to what is commonly called the Arminian and Calvinistic controversy. The remarkable fact is that both agree in taking these two words as equivalent; so that there has been no thought of discriminating, but the habitual confusion of the two ideas “purchase” and “redemption.” The effect of this has been most disastrous; because it hinders, not only the settlement of the question, but all clear and sound discernment of the truths revealed. It is the confounding of the two that makes the chief difficulty. It does not seem to have occurred to any engaged in the ancient or the modern strife to distinguish between the truths conveyed by these words.

What then is the scriptural connection of “purchase?” The apostle is here looking at Christians, slaves as well as those who had never been other than free. Of all he says, “Ye were bought with a price.” They had become by purchase the property of God; such is the effect of being bought. Right of possession had been acquired by purchase. “Ye were bought with a price:” the effect is to make the one purchased His own. If He buys, those who are bought become His slaves.

But another fact has to be considered. In 2 Peter 2:1 we find the solemn prediction that as in the ancient people of God there were false prophets, so there should be false teachers among Christians, and how characterized? “Bringing in heresies (i.e. sects) of perdition, denying the Lord that bought them.” Here it would be unwarranted to say “denying the Lord that redeemed them.” “Denying the Lord that bought them” is true; denying the Lord that redeemed them is false. “Bought” is universal, being true of all, whether they own it or not.

The Lord bought the world and every soul in it: all mankind belongs to Him. It is not merely that He has the earth as the One Who created it; He has also bought it. After sin entered and brought in confusion and every evil work, He bought all here below with a price. So, in the parable of the treasure hid in a field (Matt. 13:44), the man who found it “goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field” —not the treasure but the field. Doubtless it is the treasure which gives him joy, but he buys the field, and not the treasure only. Such is our Lord's testimony.

Just so speaks His apostle as has been already cited. These false teachers deny the Lord that bought them. They refuse to own His title, they treat His blood with contempt or indifference; they gainsay, in short, the sovereign Master, the One to whom they belonged, not merely by creation but by purchase. Consequently their guilt was most aggravated. It was wicked to fly in the face of His creation glory; how much more to deny the Lord that bought them!

The same twofold circle of His belongings is taught elsewhere also. Thus, “As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh” (John 17:2)—here it is the Father giving the Son Whom He loved, the title over (not merely the chosen nation, or the elect in general, but) “all flesh.” Then follows the inner circle of blessing, “that He may give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.” Thus we have concentric circles in the earth, the universal one of “all flesh,” and the special one of all Christians—those that have eternal life in the Son through faith. But Christ was God's gift to the world, not to believers only.

Rom. 3:22 is still more in point, as bringing in what is due, not to His personal glory only, but to His work: “God's righteousness through faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe.” For I utterly reject the mutilated text, which reads no more than , though so given in A B C P, etc. It is easy to see how . might have been confounded with ., for even Dean Alford (who does not go so far as some moderns in sacrificing every consideration to the oldest external evidence, and, therefore, only brackets .) will have it, that in the theological meaning has no real difference from , and adds to this error the further one of referring to ver. 30 and Gal. 1:1, which in fact prove an intended distinction. But it is to me incredible that an unprincipled scribe should have seen the grave difference which results from the full reading, amply sustained as it is by an ancient and widespread testimony; especially as a similar difference reappears in chap. 5:18, 19, couched in a somewhat altered form, which shows only the more emphatically how well-founded is the distinction. Even Bengel, who rightly accepted the fuller text, understood its value no more than Theodoret and other fathers, who applied . to the Jews, and . to the Gentiles! No wonder people revolted from so unsatisfactory an exposition, and were disposed to doubt the text on which it was based.

It would have been wiser to have weighed the words more fully, and sought their true force. For it ought to have been plain enough that by the apostle was indicating the direction of God's righteousness to all, Jew or Gentile, without distinction. Had it been man's righteousness, it could only, indeed, have been under law, and hence for the Jews alone who had the law; but it is God's righteousness by means of faith in Jesus Christ, and hence “toward all” without distinction, yet for that reason it takes effect only “upon all those who believe,” but on all such, be they Jew or Gentile. It was preached to all, for all were objects of divine compassion, and Christ died for all; but it took effect only on believers in Him, and on all of them. What can be conceived more luminous than the statement, more grave than the distinction, or more consoling than the truth, for those who bow to the gospel and Him whom it makes known? But the distinction is enfeebled or lost in a weightier witness than Dean Alford or the Greek fathers, even in the Authorized Version of Rom. 5:18, where should be rendered “unto” or “toward,” in 3:22. The apostle is distinguishing the universal tendency or bearing of Christ's act with Adam's in chap. 5:18, from its actual effect in the following verse, which exactly answers to what we have seen in chap. 3:22. How confirmatory of the difference between purchase and redemption, need not be insisted on at greater length.

Take, again, another case in Heb. 2. We do find, undoubtedly, many sons that are brought to glory, and Christ becomes the Captain of salvation to lead them there; but is this all? Did He not “by the grace of God taste death for every man?” Yea, perhaps a little more, “for everything?” This scripture embraces, at least, man universally. Is, then, Universalism true? Destructive falsehood; none more dishonoring to God or ruinous to man! It fundamentally undermines both holiness and love, both righteousness and grace; it virtually dissipates on the one hand sin, and on the other judgment, mercy, and salvation. If there is an appearance of goodness, it is a cloak for Satan's lie. When it is said,

“that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man,” it is a witness, undoubtedly, of the rich and wide mercy of God; but does not this very thing immensely aggravate the guilt of those who despise it? Still the two things are plain and distinct—by God's grace the death of Jesus for everyone; and His bringing “many sons to glory.” The truth is guarded on every side. There is the testimony of love to every creature; there is also the full security of the delivered.

There too redemption comes in as distinct from purchase. Redemption is a matter of distinct application and delivering power to the persons or things concerned. It is never merely a testimony of grace, or manifestation of the character of God and His goodness, reaching out to the whole scene He has created. Redemption is the intervention of God (and ultimately for the body) that breaks the bond of the enemy, and delivers the one that was captive. It may be by blood for the soul, but finally by power for the body. Thus it is always treated in scripture. Hence you find, “Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so, whom He hath redeemed” &c. (Psa. 107:2). Whom does the Spirit mean? All mankind? Not so, but Israel only.

Doubtless, when we come to the characteristic truth of the New Testament, redemption has another sphere; and where is this found? Unquestionably it is believers, Jew or Gentile, the church of God. Hence, whether you take up the Ephesians or any part of the later scriptures, where redemption is treated of as a present thing, this is the language: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” or offenses (Eph. 1:7). It is not, therefore, merely a manifestation of grace which may be despised and ineffectual; it is an unfailing work, a delivering operation, a blessing that is actually conferred and possessed: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” It is not merely that we have been purchased through the price paid, which may or may not be owned by our souls. That is, there may be persons bought that are unrenewed, and they may turn out rebels against His rights Who bought them (denying, as it is said, the Master that bought them). It is not so with redemption—here it is an actual, known, and enjoyed blessing, if you speak of the soul. It is true, however, that it is not confined to the soul. In the same chapter of the same Epistle to the Ephesians we read of the redemption of the purchased possession. Here it looks at the inheritance, when the body also shall be changed in the day of redemption. Compare chap. 4:30. As believers in the Lord Jesus now, through His precious blood we have our sins as completely gone as in the day of judgment. It is a mistake to suppose that only then will be the decision of the great question. He that believes on God's Son is not judged; but he that believes not is already judged, because he has not believed on the name of the Only-begotten Son of God. “And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, for their works were evil.” The object of that day will be to manifest all, and to execute judgment on the unbelieving. It is now or never that in Christ we have life and forgiveness. “By Him,” as it is said, “all that believe are justified from all things,” not merely shall be. If you speak of life, it is just the same thing: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.” It is a present thing. So redemption, the forgiveness of sins, is an actual state of possessed deliverance through faith in Christ and His work.

(To be continued)

Bible Treasury: Volume 16, Purchase and Redemption

There is nothing that characterizes fallen man more than the love of change. In an unfallen state there was not even a desire for it, had it been possible. And the very reverse will characterize the rest of glory, that rest which “remaineth for the people of God.” But, in the meantime, one sees man trying to find in change a relief from his misery, to drown all serious thoughts by a continual recourse to some new thing, some fresh effort, some novel experiment. This is so true that certain sages of this world define happiness to be change: could they really condemn themselves more? They thereby show that they have no knowledge of God; for, as God Himself is the Unchanging One, so He brings His people to know even now peace with Him; yea, a state of calm settled blessedness, of repose for the spirit, of rest in His love, His peace, that would be utterly ruined by the suspicion of a change. They thus tell their own sad tale, that they are far from God, that they taste a misery which is not in any wise done with, but only concealed by constant fluctuation, if peradventure they might find—I will not say comfort, but—forgetfulness of their sorrow. Such is the estate of man fallen: nothing more dismal; and men are afraid to face it: else they might look out of all these shifts of wretchedness to the Unchanging One, Who can change all things for us, and Who so does through His own Son, to give to us a blessedness which does not change.

Nor is it only men of the world that we see thus ensnared: Christians are apt to be affected by the thoughts of the age, of those around them. Among the Christians of the New Testament none show this more than the saints at Corinth. The reason is plain. They still admired the refined world and its opinions; and they were, therefore, more or less drawn into the feelings and ways of the world. This appears not only elsewhere, but in that which gave occasion for the apostolic teaching in this part of the chapter. We can understand it well. The condition of a slave (and he was writing about slaves) in those days was no doubt distressing. Take a heathen master, where there was the grossest moral degradation, with Christian slaves men or women: these could scarcely escape the sight and sound of most defiling communications, they must ever be exposed to that which was irreconcilably opposed to the purity of new life in Christ. One can understand how natural the desire might be, in the heart of a slave, to be delivered from such a state of things; but to set the heart on a deliverance of this kind is the very thing the apostle here rebukes. He would not have it made an object. Prayer was a different thing, if it might please God to present a door of escape; but the general principle, as laid down by him, points in the contrary direction—to abide as they had been called. And this is said expressly to those who were in the condition of bondage. But it is revealed for their comfort, that God has introduced in the Lord Jesus a principle and a power superior to any and all circumstances in ourselves or around us. Now, our faith is meant to bow to this as God's word for us; and, therefore, the cultivation or allowance of desires for shifting our circumstances is clearly opposed to faith. The duty of a Christian is subjection to God where he is; it is indeed more—confidence in His present interest and affection; in His willingness to direct, and to order all for us. May we not detect in ourselves such restlessness that we really treat. God as if He paid no heed, nor loved us—at least in our actual circumstances and present relationships on earth? What utter unbelief, and this in believers!

But the apostle takes up these questions of the Corinthians, in order to bring out the mind of God, and to give us divine counsel, while passing through such a scene as this. Therefore he lays down in a few brief words the principle— “Art thou called, being a slave (for such was the “servant” here)? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use it rather.” The utmost sobriety prevails. There in no such extreme view as speculative minds have imported into the phrase that the Christian had better remain a slave, even if he could be free. Such a dream might commend itself perhaps to the student in his comfortable library, but certainly not if he knew practically what slavery meant, especially in heathen times, and for Christians above all. “Let it not be a care to thee:” he must not treat the Lord as if He did not look upon the one He

loved, nor enter into his sorrows and condition; let him believe that it was He who ordered all. It is His to arrange, ours to obey; for does it become the soldier in the field of battle to choose for himself what he shall do? Or is it a great matter that he should understand why one or another is put in any post of danger? To dispose of each rests with the one who commands.

Now there can be no doubt of Christ's love or wisdom, Who brings in what is entirely above all questions, what grace alone could conceive, and what grace now confers. Hence it is of all consequence that we should see the present power of the truth of God; for it is now that we walk by faith, now that we need its comfort and strength. Sorely we shall have the results of the divine purpose forever on high; but it is now above all that we need to walk in the faith of His grace, saying, in the hope of the glory, “The slave called in the Lord is the Lord's freedman; likewise the freeman called is the Lord's slave” (verse 22). Here we have a very blessed pointing out of the relationships of the believer, and this, too, in the true moral order for the soul. It is not first, you observe, that we are Christ's servants; we are the Lord's freemen; indeed, one is a little more, “the Lord's freedman” —he that was a slave, but is a slave no longer. The Lord's “freedman” is a word not used elsewhere, that I recollect, in the New Testament.

“Likewise also the freeman that was called is Christ's slave.” He is speaking now of the man whose position and circumstances seemed outwardly so much fairer. But he is Christ's slave. Now it is well to point out, as far as the Lord enables me, the force and the connection of this twofold place. For it is not merely that one applies to the slave and the other to the Freeman. I shall endeavor to show that both are true of every saint, and to show, too, what they are as connected with the mighty work of our Lord Jesus; for it is of the greatest consequence to see every privilege having its root in the grace of God, and all revealed in the word of God, and all centering in the person and work of Christ.

Now there are confessedly difficulties on the subject, and they have been felt so long and widely that one cannot but desire for God's children generally a clearer view of the truth: especially as growth in divine things depends on a fuller perception of Christ and His work by the Holy Spirits use of the written word. God has always so ordered it, that the soul is led into the truth by the Holy Spirit, Who will not act apart from the glory of the Lord Jesus. He may use means if He please; but every attempt to perpetuate truth in the abstract is vain. Apart from Christ it cannot be truly known. There is something exceedingly gracious of God in it, because in this way He keeps up the freshness of the truth for His saints. He does not permit it to become a science, which is in fact what theology is and boasts to be. But where, when, ever did a soul drink of the living water in those dry beds? Let me then point out the difference between what scripture calls being “bought” or purchased, as distinct from redeemed. It is a familiar fact that the words of the Spirit are not really the same, though frequently confounded in our justly prized English Bible. The translators seem never to have suspected that there was any substantial distinction; and the mass of expositors and preachers have followed in their wake.

Take for, instance in Rev. 5:9, “redeemed us to God.” Here it is the word not for redemption, but for purchase; and compare chap. 14:3, 4. It is, “Thou hast bought us to God.” In our chapter it is translated aright, as in 1 Cor. 6:20. The word “bought” does not mean redeem; but so thoroughly had these two thoughts been identified in the minds of Christians generally that even the difference was quite ignored by the two parties who stand most opposed to one another as they have been for 1400 years. I refer to the old Pelagian struggle in the fifth century (between those who contended for grace in God to meet the sinner's ruin, and those who held up man's ability to please and serve God if he liked), or, when you come down to later times, to what is commonly called the Arminian and Calvinistic controversy. The remarkable fact is that both agree in taking these two words as equivalent; so that there has been no thought of discriminating, but the habitual confusion of the two ideas “purchase” and “redemption.” The effect of this has been most disastrous; because it hinders, not only the settlement of the question, but all clear and sound discernment of the truths revealed. It is the confounding of the two that makes the chief difficulty. It does not seem to have occurred to any engaged in the ancient or the modern strife to distinguish between the truths conveyed by these words.

What then is the scriptural connection of purchase? The apostle is here looking at Christians, slaves as well as those who had never been other than free. Of all he says, “Ye were bought with a price.” They had become by purchase the property of God; such is the effect of being bought. Right of possession had been acquired by purchase. “Ye were bought with a price:” the effect is to make the one purchased His own. If He buys, those who are bought become His slaves.

But another fact has to be considered. In 2 Peter 2:1 we find the solemn prediction that, as in the ancient people of God there were false prophets, so there should be false teachers among Christians, and how characterized? “Bringing in heresies (i.e. sects) of perdition, denying the Lord that bought them.” Here it would be unwarranted to say “denying the Lord that redeemed them.” “Denying the Lord that bought them” is true, denying the Lord that redeemed them is false. “Bought” is universal, being true of all whether they own it or not.

The Lord bought the world and every soul, in it: all mankind belongs to Him. It is not merely that He has the earth as the One Who created it; He has also bought it. After sin entered and brought in confusion and every evil work, He bought all here below with a price. So, in the parable of the treasure hid in a field (Matt. 13:44), the man who found it goeth and selleth all that he hath and buyeth that field—not the treasure but the field. Doubtless it is the treasure which gives him joy, but he buys the field, and not the treasure only. Such is our Lord's testimony.

Just so speaks His apostle as he has already cited. These false teachers deny the Lord that bought them. They refuse to own His title, they treat His blood with contempt or indifference; they gainsay, in short, the sovereign Master, the One to whom they belonged not merely by creation but by purchase. Consequently their guilt was most aggravated. It was wicked to fly, in the face of His creation glory; how much more to deny the Lord that bought them!

The same twofold circle of His belongings is taught elsewhere also. Thus, “As thou hast given Him power over all flesh” (John 17:2)—here it is the Father giving the Son Whom He loved the title over (not merely the chosen nation, or the elect in general but) “all flesh.” Then follows the inner circle of blessing, “that He may give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him.” Thus we have concentric circles in the earth, the universal one of “all flesh,” and the special one of all Christians—those that have eternal life in the Son through faith. But Christ was God's gift to the world, not to believers only. Romans 3:22 is still more in point, as bringing in what is due, not to His personal glory only, but to His work: “God's righteousness through faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe.” For I utterly reject the mutilated text, which reads no more than , though so given in à A. B C P, etc. It is easy to see how ., might have been confounded with ., for even Dean Alford (who does not go so far as some moderns in sacrificing every consideration to the oldest external evidence, and therefore only brackets .) will have it that in the theological meaning has no real difference from , and adds to this error the further one of referring to ver. 30 and Gal. 1:1, which in fact prove an intended distinction. But it is to me incredible that an unprincipled scribe should have seen the grave difference which results from the full reading, amply sustained as it is by ancient and widespread testimony; especially as a similar difference reappears in chap. 5:18,

19, couched in a somewhat altered form, which shows only the more emphatically how well-founded is the distinction. Even Bengel, who rightly accepted the fuller text, understood its value no more than Theodoret and other fathers, who applied . to the Jews, and . to the Gentiles. No wonder people revolted from so unsatisfactory an exposition, and were disposed to doubt the text on which it was based.

It would have been wiser to have weighed the words more fully, and sought their true force. For it ought to have been plain enough that by the apostle was indicating the direction of God's righteousness to all, Jew or Gentile, without distinction had it been man's righteousness, it could only indeed have been under law, and hence for the Jews alone who had the law; but it is God's righteousness by means of faith in Jesus Christ, and hence “toward all” without distinction, yet for that reason it takes effect only “upon all those who believe,” but on all such, be they Jew or Gentile. It was preached to all, for all were objects of divine compassion, and Christ died for all; but it took effect only on believers in Him, and on all of them. What can be conceived more luminous than the statement, more grave than the distinction, or more consoling than the truth, for those who bow to the gospel and Him whom, it makes known? But the distinction is enfeebled or lost in a weightier witness than Dean Alford or the Greek fathers, even in the authorized version of Rom. 5:18, where as should be rendered “unto” or “toward,” as in 3:22. The apostle is distinguishing the universal tendency or bearing of Christ's act with Adam's in chap. 5:18, from its actual effect in the following verse, which exactly answers to what we have seen in chap. 3:22. How confirmatory of the difference between purchase and redemption need not be insisted on at greater length.

Take again another case in Heb. 2. We do find undoubtedly many sons that are brought to glory, and Christ becomes the Captain of salvation to lead them there; but is this all? Did He not “by the grace of God taste death for every man? “Yea, perhaps a little more,” for everything? “This scripture embraces at least man universally. Is, then, Universalism true? Destructive falsehood; none more dishonoring to God or ruinous to man! It fundamentally undermines both holiness and love, both righteousness and grace; it virtually dissipates on the one hand sin and on the other judgment, mercy, and salvation. If there is an appearance of goodness, it is a cloak for Satan's lie. When it is said, “that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man,” it is a witness undoubtedly of the rich and wide mercy of God; but does not this very thing immensely aggravate the guilt of those who despise it? Still the two things are plain and distinct—by God's grace the death of Jesus for every one; and His bringing “many sons to glory.” The truth is guarded on every side. There is the testimony of love to every creature; there is also the full security of the delivered.

There too redemption comes in as distinct from purchase. Redemption is a matter of distinct application and delivering power to the persons or things concerned. It is never merely a testimony of grace, or manifestation of the character of God and His goodness, reaching out to the whole scene He has created. Redemption is the intervention of God (and ultimately for the body) that breaks the bond of the enemy, and delivers the one that was captive. It may be by blood for the soul, but finally by power for the body. Thus it is always treated in scripture. Hence you find, “Let the redeemed of Jehovah say so, whom He hath redeemed” &c. (Psa. 107:2). Whom does the Spirit mean? All mankind? Not so, but Israel only.

Doubtless, when we come to the characteristic truth of the New Testament, redemption has another sphere; and where is this found? Unquestionably it is believers, Jew or Gentile, the church of God. Hence, whether you take up the Ephesians or any part of the later scriptures, where redemption is treated of as a present thing, this is the language: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” or offenses (Eph. 1:7). It is not, therefore, merely a manifestation of grace which may be despised and ineffectual; it is an unfailing work, a delivering operation, a blessing that is actually conferred and possessed: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” It is not merely that we have been purchased through the price paid, which may or may not be owned by our souls. That is, there may be persons bought that are unrenewed, and they may turn out rebels against His rights Who bought them (denying, as it is said, the Master that bought them). It is not so with redemption; here it is an actual, known, and enjoyed blessing, if you speak of the soul. It is true, however, that it is not confined to the soul. In the same chapter of the same Epistle to the Ephesians we read of the redemption of the purchased possession. Here it looks at the inheritance, when the body also shall be changed in the day of redemption.

Compare chap. 4:30. As believers in the Lord Jesus now, through His precious blood we have our sins as completely gone as in the day of judgment. It is a mistake to suppose that only then will be the decision of the great question. He that believes on God's Son is not judged; but he that believes not is already judged, because he has not believed on the name of the Only-begotten Son of God. “And this is the judgment, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, for their works were evil.” The object of that day will be to manifest all, and to execute judgment on the unbelieving. It is now or never that in Christ we have life and forgiveness. “By Him,” as it is said, “all that believe are justified from all things,” not merely shall be. If you speak of life, it is just the same thing: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” It is a present thing. So redemption, the forgiveness of sins, is an actual state of possessed deliverance through faith in Christ and His work.

Thus then we have, with the absolute certainty of God's word, the answer to that which, however simple and certain in itself, has, proved a difficulty so general among men. Purchase is universal, but does not necessarily secure that all who come under it now will submit to Him Who bought them. Redemption is not of the same extent as purchase, being not universal but partial. It is effectual and complete, as far as the soul is concerned, even now for those who believe. Consequently it is not at all true that, because purchase is universal, redemption should be. On the contrary, scripture shows that redemption is predicated only of a sphere which is limited, whereas purchase is an unlimited one. The creature itself also shall be set free from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth together and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only so, but even we ourselves having the first-fruits of the Spirit groan in ourselves, awaiting adoption, [to wit,] the redemption of our body. God will reconcile all things, never all persons, but all things heavenly and earthly. Meanwhile believers are reconciled. “You hath He reconciled';” while the gospel was proclaimed, and so it is now, in the whole creation under heaven. Here again the testimony is unlimited, for all is purchased; but then those only have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, who believe in the Lord Jesus.

This, then, as a matter of truth, is as sure as it is plain; but next we come to its consequences, for every truth has its answer in practice, and speaks to the affections. How, then, does this truth find its reflection in our hearts? and what answer does it look for in our practical path day by day? “The slave called in the Lord is the Lord's freedman” (ver. 22). What is it that sets the captive free? What is it that brings us into liberty? Is it purchase So far from this is it that purchase, instead of giving me my liberty, rather makes me a bondman. I am His to serve, now and evermore, Who bought me with a price—His own blood. But people do not serve Christ when it is merely a question of being thus bought. There is another blessing necessary to make the claim of purchase felt, even redemption. For the adverse power of Satan has possession of me in my natural state, and he avails himself of my self will and love of the world. This must be broken; but how can it be? It is by redemption,

when the believer, finding life in Christ, is won to God. How blessed, then, to have redemption in Him through His blood! Unless I am thus brought to God through Him Who suffered once for sins, Just for unjust, what is there to set me free? A slave of sin—what is to liberate me? There is nothing in the nature of purchase to set one free; there may be, and is, a powerful motive in it when the spell of Satan is broken, and forgiveness is known in the incomparable grace of God, but not before or otherwise.

Hence, therefore, in dealing with the different classes addressed, the apostle distinctly lays down the truth, “The slave called in the Lord [even if he abide a slave] is the Lord's freedman.” As a Christian, he need not therefore be troubled about his condition of bondage; no change of life, no intervention of others, could give him such a freedom as he has already. He was a slave, but, called in the Lord, he is His freedman; he belongs to the One Who has set him free. Being called in the Lord, grace gives him freedom forever; it is not for a little while, as in the institutes of law or relations of flesh. Consequently he is entitled to take comfort without an anxious thought. What could the world give him? what could money do for him? Either might procure an emancipation; but from either does it not perish with the using? Neither in any way makes him the Lord's freedman; but redemption does. Thus the Christian slave was divinely consoled and cheered. Can we fail to see that the scripture abounds in such filling of the heart with comfort from above?

So in the Epistle to Titus we have a similar thing. “The grace of God, which bringeth salvation unto all men, hath appeared,” is an outburst of thankfulness in view especially of slaves visited by the saving grace of God, which went out to all, “teaching as that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people.” It is not merely purchase here, but redemption. There was the delivering power. It is not therefore merely a price paid, which might as yet have no answer, in those purchased. They had redemption in Christ through His blood. Redemption is a state entered, and not merely a title of Christ asserted. He has bought the world: the heathens, the Jews, are all purchased; whatever their actual feeling or conduct, they are bought, one as truly as another. He has right thereby to every soul. But redemption is our state and not His claim only. No man is redeemed unless there be an effect produced—present deliverance from the enemy and the forgiveness of sins, though it goes beyond. So those that were redeemed of old were not left under Pharaoh; they were brought across the Red Sea, God taking His place with them. In Egypt the blood of the lamb secured Israel, so that judgment did not fall on them; but they were redeemed also, and brought completely out of the house of bondage. Revelation supposes known deliverance, though in the wilderness. Evidently, then, the difference is marked.

But we have to see how the apostle turns to the other side. “Likewise the freeman called is Christ's slave.” He now changes the phrase; he does not say he is the Lord's bondman, but “Christ's.” He might be freeborn, or a master of slaves; but be he what he may, if a Christian, he is Christ's bondman. He is bound forever to Him who shed His blood for him. It is the purchase that is urged now to make the freeman feel that he is Christ's bondman. It is an appeal to his sense of grace, and not merely of authority.

In what, then, consists the difference between purchase to the believer and the unbeliever? It lies in this, that faith acknowledges the purchase, while unbelief despises it and all responsibility founded on it. The believer owns it, and is bound to glorify God in his body, as no longer his own. So we find Israel acknowledging both in the song of Moses, “Thou in Thy mercy hast led forth the people which Thou hast redeemed....the people pass over which Thou hast purchased” (Ex. 15:13-16). Men may abuse the purchase to their destruction.

But the great truth is plain. The believer is redeemed by the mighty arm of the Lord; he is no longer the slave of Satan, though he was; he is forgiven his offenses, and does not stop there, but he passes into liberty; he is on the other side of the Red Sea, and he can now sing for the first time. Israel's song was only when they were clean out of the land of bondage; and so with the believer now. Redemption is the great thought, from Ex. 14 and onward, but the same song owns that then they were bought; and the soul should reflect upon both: “A slave once, I am become the Lord's freedman, for I am redeemed. But I am purchased also, and so became Christ's bondman.” Such is the double truth for the Christian, as the apostle puts it. So it was in the type. Jehovah had interfered as a man of war. It was a fight between Himself and the enemy. Israel never struck a blow, but none the less enjoyed the victory. So with the Christian now. He is the Lord's freedman. He was the slave of sin and Satan, but the Lord has delivered him from all that kept him in bondage; but of what is be reminded—he who had known only human liberty? He is bought with a price, and Christ's servant; he is glad to acknowledge such bonds of love. For “Christ” is the name that speaks of grace, as “the Lord” at once recalls supreme authority. The believer acknowledges himself bondman, not merely as his duty to the Lord, but as that in which his heart is concerned; it is his boast, his joy, his glory, to be Christ's slave; and this is the more strikingly said of him who never knew other than freedom in the world. Both in truth were the Lord's freedmen, and both Christ's bondmen; but it comes out with the greater emphasis when the distinction is put as the apostle puts it here.

Even in the Revelation, as we have remarked, the thought as here is purchase rather than redemption! In chap. 5:9 it is the worth of the buyer, and consequently the value of the price paid that is celebrated, not the liberated state of the redeemed. Hence in the text is not found—an omission as hard to account for, unless it be the truth, in A., 44, Aeth., as it is easy to understand its insertion in all the other witnesses. The Lamb is worthy, because he was slain and purchased to God by His blood out of every tribe and tongue, etc., and made them to our God a kingdom and priests; and they shall reign over the earth. Such is the new song of the elders; whereas is our state, rather than the costly act which bought us. In chap. xiv. 3, 4, though the connection of course differs, the 144,000 with the Lamb on Mount Zion were bought from the earth and from men. From these they were purchased, so that they did not belong to either; but it is not the act or state of deliverance they were in. . may go a little farther, yet it is not properly “redeem,” but buying up or retrieving, as in Gal. 3:13, 4:5; Eph. 5:16; and Col. 4:5. It is not the state of deliverance we enjoy, though this, be the result for the believer, but that Christ bought out from under the law those once under it to make them His own; or ourselves exhorted to make the fitting time or opportunity our own. Cf. Dan. 2:8 for the two latter references.

Thus we see our place with reference to these two truths. Beyond doubt the Lord has, in His infinite goodness, interfered for us in our utter guilt and rain. On the one hand, He has dealt with Satan, who had us enslaved, and brought us clean out of that bitter bondage; on the other hand, we are bought with a price, and have not a single right that is not swallowed up in that purchase by Christ's blood, not only what we have, but ourselves also. “Ye were bought with a price.” The Corinthians were dull to see and own what it is to be thus bought. Therefore the Spirit takes up the truth again and again. In chapter 6 they were reminded that their body was the temple of the Holy Ghost, which was in them, which they had of God; but, moreover, that they were not their own, for they were bought with a price: therefore were they to glorify God in their body; they belonged to Christ the Lord. Thus there is not only a divine power that deigns to dwell and work in answer to Christ in the body: to take our own way, or do our own will, is denying God's title to us as His positive possession through Christ's blood. We are His for all the way, and not merely for the end in glory. We are His to please and glorify Him now in this world, yea, in these bodies of humiliation

which the Holy Spirit deigns to make God's temple.

Here the exhortation takes a rather different direction, though grounded on the same truth. “Ye were bought with a price: be not ye slaves of men.” There it was urged against pleasing ourselves, especially against corrupt license and impure passions. Here it is a guard against pandering to others, it might be for ease or honor, or to avoid pain or reproach: a great snare to the Corinthians, not to slaves only, but as much, or more, to the free. Hence the force of this word which embraces both. The Lord's freedman should not become a slave of men; neither should Christ's slave. There is not such a thought as enfeebling the Christian slave in serving his earthly master: grace would rather strengthen him to serve with twofold zeal and honor, for he was now the Lord's freedman. How base again for one who, after the flesh free but now bound to Christ as His slave by the deepest and most durable of ties, should become man's slave by compromising his Master, Who had bought him with His blood!

All this and more is clenched in the following verses of our chapter. “But this I say, brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use the world as not abasing it.” As the verses before deliver the believer from the spirit of change, so these sweep away every thought of a settling down in the world that now is. Not a word brings in formally the return of our Lord Jesus Christ; but it is all really and profoundly based on that great and most influential truth, as a living constant expectation. What does the entire course of the world depend on? It takes for granted ages to come for man and man's progress here below; it thus denies virtually, and often openly, the Lord's coming as a real hope, or even truth. Do you think that that which fills man with vainglory, or kindles his enthusiasm, or nerves him to labor and endurance—that all or any of these things would be found if he believed the Lord was coming? Clearly not. All the aspirations of the world, all that men here pant after as objects, and push forward as ways and means, are founded on an uninterrupted future. They confidently look for amelioration and advance. Just as infidel but credulous geologists, naturalists, etc., imagine an indefinite past here below, so they generally build all their hopes of the progressive and triumphant future, not on God's word, or Christ's coming and reign, but on an assumed infinite series of improved methods and inventions, till they reach a perfection of their own for the human race on earth.

But the coming again of the Lord at any moment outs up by the root all such unbelieving and presumptuous speculations of men. Hence their angry opposition to that truth. Hence the guilt and shame of the church's failure to walk in that light. Not believing it herself, she says in her heart, My Lord delayeth His coming, eats and drinks with the drunken, and beats most those who have been most faithful in serving Him. The consequence is, she does not confess this grave but also bright testimony of divine truth, as He meant it, before the world; for people must walk and worship in the truth they utter (if even, alas! they do utter it, for Many deny it), in order to have power with others. Everything good flows really from faith working by love, the springs of which are in God. When souls show that the heart is filled with Christ, when the ways are according to the truth they confess, then even enemies feel that for them it is a living reality. We know what the blessed hope was to the apostles and the church of that day: what has it been since?

Here, in the apostle's exhortation to all, we see its influence so mighty that, without a word of direct reference, it shows the time straitened. Not that it does not reveal a period of true and holy blessedness for the earth afterward; but there will be a total change, compared with which the greatest of revolutions is as nothing; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, not the earth only but also heaven, and the world-kingdom of the Lord and His Christ shall come, not to speak of the still brighter portion of the glorified saints in the Father's house. Thus the scriptural expectation effectually blots out from heart and mind a long future for man's enjoyment as he is. “It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use the world as not abusing1 it; for the fashion of this world passeth away” (vers. 29-31). It is not, of course, that Christ ignores relationship, sorrow, joy, business, or position; but He brings in an energy of the Spirit for each, which, while deepening sensibility, and respecting everything which God established in nature and on earth, raises superior to all and attaches to Christ in heaven about to come again. The apostle thus would have the saint true to Christ on the one hand, and on the other to form a just estimate, of the world as already condemned, and only awaiting the Lord's coming to have the sentence executed. For not more surely has He been lifted up from the earth and does He draw all to Him, than the judgment of the world is now, though its prince has yet to be actually expelled. The apostle would have us in faith to see the present form passing away.

This brings in a most sanctifying element for the heart. What a guard for the affections even in the closest ties of life What a check to otherwise unrestrained grief! And, supposing there is an occasion of joy, what solemnity in the hope that the Lord is at hand! Ought the buyers to forget Him? or they that use this world to use it as their own? This is what I would press with all simplicity, the way in which the truth sets us free, holily free, even here on earth, in which we are now to be entirely the Lord's and only for the Lord, waiting for that bright moment when He will make good His every, word. Surely now is the time for faith to confess Him fully; now is the time to exhort one another, and so much the more as we see the day approaching.

May grace then give us to rejoice in this that, as He has set us free, so we may enjoy our liberty for His glory and not for ourselves; and as we are bought with a price, so we may refuse to become slaves to men, and gladly acknowledge Christ's purchase, redeemed from the enemy and bought for God from self and all else.

May God thus endear Christ and the truth to our hearts, proving how it all abides from, the beginning and is needed to the end, to direct and strengthen us in what we do or suffer, in the least things of this life as well as in the greatest that belong to the life to come. Amen.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 7:25-40, Notes on

The apostle had spoken of the married relation, Christians on both sides or mixed. Now he takes up the unmarried. “Now concerning virgins command of [the] Lord have I none, but I give an opinion as having received mercy of [the] Lord to be faithful. I think therefore that this is good because of the present necessity that [it is] good for a man to be so. Art thou bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But if even thou should have married, thou didst not sin; and if the virgin should have married, she did not sin. But such shall have tribulation in the flesh; but I am sparing you.” (Vers. 26-28.)

In “virgins” or we see an usage of the word not exactly unknown in classical Greek (see Jacob's Index to the Anth. Gr.) but so unusual that most New Testament commentators seem indisposed to allow it. Of the ancients Theodore of Mopsuestia found no harshness in the language. “’ , , . As to its contextual propriety there ought to be no doubt. That it should be rarely said of males in ordinary Greek authors no one acquainted with the morality of the heathen can be surprised at. If therefore it were absolutely strange among their productions, I should not consider this a valid objection to its extension in Christian or apostolic hands. What believer would limit to its sense in classic Greek? We shall find a further use of the word, lower down, natural indeed yet uncommon, the admission of which appears to be essential to a due understanding of the closing verses, where it is used for a man's own state, not of his daughter; but of this more in its own place.

It is the general question of entering on the married relation by brother or sister; and this too the apostle solves, not on the Lord's authority as commanding, but by giving a judgment of his own grounded on the opposition of the age to Christianity. It is not the instant but the present necessity which makes it best to remain as one is: such is the force of the word everywhere else in the New Testament as in other writings. It was then existing, not impending merely; nor is there any reason that I know to think that it does not exist still, as it will till the Lord come. Men habitually deny, as Christians are too apt to forget, it; but the apostle had it ever before him and sets it before us. He never conceives of a truth, especially one so solemn, without a corresponding effect on practice. Till the day of the Lord the earth is a scene of wickedness, confusion, and misery: why act as one who likes a settled life there, if indeed you are a pilgrim and stranger? It is not the special time of tribulation or of apostasy before the Lord comes in judgment that he has before him but that the gospel necessarily encounters enmity where in its purity the world discovers its own doom as unbelieving and already judged.

Yet the apostle guards the abuse of his commending a single life to the Christian ordinarily. The married should not seek its dissolution, any more than the single seek to be so bound; and again he would keep the conscience free for such as might marry. Neither man nor woman sins in being married, whatever may be its inexpediency to the Christian judgment. For trouble in the flesh is inevitable for such, and the apostle desired that they should be spared this.

Next he recurs to the topic of faith's estimate of present things, not more constantly before him than needed by the Christian. “But this I say, brethren:1 the season is straitened: henceforth2 that both those that have wives be as having none, and those that weep as weeping not, and those that rejoice as rejoicing not, and those that buy as possessing not, and those that use the world3 as not using [it] for themselves; for the fashion of the world passeth away.” (Vers. 29-31.) It is no common-place on the brevity of time, but the solemn affirmation that the time is shortened henceforth (that is, as I suppose, since Christ's death and the call of the church) in order that the believer should hold all but Christ with a loose hand—all things in which men might rejoice, however sorrowful their lot may be. But the Savior has changed all for the Christian, who looks on the earth as His place of rejection and follows Him in spirit into the heavens now opened, whence he in peace awaits Him with joy unspeakable and full of glory. This world has really no more permanence than the shifting scenes of a theater.

The construction here given of the opening clause seems to me the true one; others involve us in harshness and break the connection.

“But I would have you to be without care. The unmarried cares for the things of the Lord, how he shall please the Lord; but he that hath married careth for the things of the world how he shall please his wife. Divided also4 is both the wife and the virgin: the unmarried careth for the things of the Lord that she may be holy both5 in body and in spirit; but she that hath married careth for the things of the world how she shall please her husband. But this I say for your own profit, not that I may cast a snare [lit. a noose] over you, but for what [is] seemly and waiting on6 the Lord undistractedly.” (Vers. 32-35.) Here the apostle urges the greater exemption from earthly anxiety for serving and pleasing the Lord, which the single man or woman enjoys as compared with the married. There is less weight in the race and less distraction from the goal. Yet even here the apostle speaks with caution and delicacy. He would not entangle any, he sought their welfare with a view to seemliness and undistracted attendance on the Lord.

Here however I must take the opportunity of protesting against the remarks of a late commentator. “Since he [the apostle] wrote, the unfolding of God's providence has taught us more of the interval before the coming of the Lord than it was given even to an inspired apostle to see. And as it would be perfectly reasonable and proper to urge on an apparently dying man the duty of abstaining from contracting new worldly obligations—but both unreasonable and improper should the same person recover his health, to insist on his abstinence any longer: so now, when God has manifested His will that nations should rise up and live and decay, and long centuries elapse, before the day of the coming of Christ, it would be manifestly unreasonable to urge—except in so far as every man's is , and similar arguments are applicable—the considerations here enforced.” This may sound plausible to men in Christendom who have let slip the view scripture gives of the total ruin of man and the world, and the imminence of that judgment of the quick on which all the inspired writings insist, just as truly as those of Paul. To my mind it is a lamentable pandering to unbelief and worldliness, as it springs from the lowest conception of the authority of God's word. Doubtless the truth was so revealed that none beforehand could know that God would lengthen out the interval which severs from us the coming of the Lord. But the moral grounds are increasingly strong, not weaker. The apparently dying man is now only a great deal nearer more evidently the moment of dissolution instead of his having recovered health and strength so as fittingly to enter on new obligations. The deepening darkness of Jew and Gentile, and not of Mahometanism only but of professing Christendom, warns every eye which can see that a crisis from God is at hand; while the bright hope of the Christian, independent though it be itself of all circumstances, and essentially of heaven with Christ, shines out but the more if possible as he sees the day approaching.

It is in the next section that we have employed as equivalent to it . For there is no question here of a man's daughter but of his own state. The Lord deserves to have us wholly devoted to Himself. This is true Christian seemliness. “But if any one thinketh that he is behaving unseemly to his virginity, if he be past his prime, and so it ought to be, let him do what he will: he is not sinning: let them marry. But he who standeth firm in his heart, having no necessity, and hath authority over his own will, and hath judged this in his own7 heart to keep his own virginity shall do8 well. So that he that marrieth9 [his own virginity] doeth10 well, and he that marrieth11 not shall do better.” (Vers. 36-38.) Apparently this, the plain key to the passage, was not seen before the well-known Locke observed it, and produced excellent reasons drawn from the context, which commend themselves to any dispassionate mind. The great emphasis given to the heart's purpose, for instance, one's own will and one's own heart, suits perfectly if it be a question of one's own virginity, but how a daughter's? There they sound beyond measure arbitrary and inconsiderate. If it mean one's persevering unmarried himself, it is easy to see the force of all; as to a daughter or ward, it seems out of the way. The wonder is that Whitby should be among the few who follow Locke's interpretation. The phrase is no doubt peculiar; but the apostle may have been influenced by the Hebrew idiom which uses the plural for the abstract idea. The singular seems more suited to the Greek tongue, which allows sometimes of a secondary sense, as e. g. life, and means of life.

“A wife is bound12 as long as her husband liveth; but should the husband13 have fallen asleep, she is free to be married to whom she will, only in [the] Lord. But she is happier if she so remain according to my opinion, and I also think that I have God's Spirit.” (Vers. 39, 40.)

The close of the chapter takes up widows especially and is a remarkable instance of opposition between the apostle's mind and the church councils which dared to treat a widow's marrying as so evil that the church had to refuse its sanction and prayers. The marriage tie of believers is for life. Death separates. Not only the widower but the widow becomes thus free to marry again. But the apostle gives his judgment against it: not on moral grounds, of which only superstition could raise a question, but as the happier state to abide in. Even here we have no such language as sprang up later when celibacy was cried up as the highest of Christian virtues, and re-marriage was denounced as unchristian. On the contrary, even for the widow, the apostle qualifies her marrying again “only in the Lord:” a phrase which goes farther than the fact that both are Christians and demands that it be after a Christian sort. Yet here again the apostle points out what he judged more expedient on spiritual grounds. Had others given a different opinion? He, if any man might, gives his judgment as one who thought he had God's Spirit. He was inspired to put it thus, not as if he were of doubtful mind, but as avoiding an express command from the Lord, and rather as apostolic counsel.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 7:15-24, Notes on

We have seen then the striking contrast between the gracious power of the gospel and the weakness of the law. Under the one, the unbeliever sanctified in the believing relation and the fruit of their union holy; under the other, the Jew defiled and the children unclean.

But it may be well here to notice the use made of verse 14 by both the parties to the baptismal dispute. Thus writes Dr. Wall, in his “History of Infant Baptism” (I., 145, Ed. 4, 1819): “Mr. Walker has taken the pains to produce quotations out of almost all the ancient writers, to show that this was a common phrase with them to say, an infant or other person sanctified, when they mean baptized; and I do, for brevity's sake, refer the reader to his book. The scripture also uses it so (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:26), which makes that explication of 1 Cor. 7:14, ‘Now are you children,' which is given by Tertullian, St. Austin, St. Hierom, Paulinus, Pelagius (chap. 19), and other ancients, and since by Dr. Hammond, Mr. Walker, &c., much the more probable; whereby they make the words () holy, and (), has been sanctified, to refer to baptism. Their explication is also the more probable, because there has no other sense of those words been yet given by expositors but what is liable to much contest; but especially that sense which some Antipredo-baptists have endeavored to affix to them (of legitimacy, in opposition to bastardy) seems the most forced and far-fetched of all. The words are , . . . The grammatical translation of which words is, ‘For the unbelieving husband [or an unbelieving husband] has been sanctified by the wife;'.... and our translators altered the tense, and put is sanctified instead of has been sanctified; because they thought, it seems, the sense required it; but without any such alteration, the paraphrase given by many learned men is to this purpose: For it has ordinarily come to pass, that an unbelieving husband has been brought to the faith, and so to baptism, by his wife; and likewise an unbelieving wife by her husband. If it were not so, and if the wickedness or infidelity of the unbelieving party did usually prevail, the children of such would be generally kept unbaptized, and so be unclean; but now we see, by the grace of God, a contrary effect, for they are generally baptized, and so become holy, or sanctified.”

The intelligent Christian will see that, the ancient fathers notwithstanding, scripture does not warrant this usage. 1 Cor. 6:11, and Eph. 5:26, teach a truth as different from the bearing of 1 Cor. 7:14 as from 1 Tim. 4:4, 5, the cleansing power of the word as applied by the Spirit. The Christian, the assembly, is thus sanctified. It is a real divine work: cf. John 13; 15, and 1 John 5 Blood expiates, but water purifies; that is, the word, as the expression of the truth, and the revelation of God in Christ, judges all contrary to God within and without. Thus are the saints, from first to last, formed morally to have part with Christ on high. His power will complete all at His return, as His first coming in love laid the foundation for all in the gift of Himself for us. It is ignorance of these scriptures to confound with them 1 Cor. 7:14, as may yet be shown more fully. But the ancients, and those who build on them, are scarce darker as to this than the moderns, even if evangelical. Washing by the word is outside their traditions; it is perfectly certain in scripture, and most momentous for Christian doctrine and practice,

But Dr. Wall's criticism is unsound. Our translators were far nearer the troth than he. His alteration of the tense is not only not required, but falsifies the sense. The aorist would be the form, rather than the perfect, to convey his notion and bear his paraphrase. The perfect expresses a state consequent on an act, whether we say “is,” or “has been, sanctified.” But it means the permanent result of a completed action, and not what ordinarily comes to pass, a sense of which the gnomic or iterative aorist may approach, as in James 1:10, 23 Peter 1:24. Hence the teaching deduced is all wrong. The apostle means a sanctified, or holy, state, actually and always true of the husband and children of a believing wife, not of what generally becomes true. Not a hint is dropped in this verse of being converted or brought to baptism.

Must we then embrace the view which prevails among Baptists? Not so. Legitimacy is out of the question. The children are said to be , not the danger was lest they should be , not . The marriage of believers is no more lawful than that of unbelievers. The question is as to God's sanction for the Christian's conscience of a mixed marriage, and its fruit; and, as to this, the apostle decides that the unbelieving partner is hallowed in the believing one, and the children holy, not unclean: the one being placed in that state of holiness by the faith of the other, and the children viewed as in it already. Of fitness for baptism, on the one hand, the text says nothing: if it did, it would assert it for the unbelieving husband or wife, no less than for the children. On the other hand, it is a mean and untrue sense of that it refers to the lawfulness or validity of the marriage, especially as all turns on the faith of at least one of the parties. So Mr. Booth's effort to render to, instead of “in,” is futile. Luke 1:17, 1 Thess. 4:7, and 2 Peter 1:5, 6, 7, give not the least warrant for it, any more than 1 Cor. 7:15. The first is elliptic, and has a pregnant force. John was to turn disobedient ones not merely to, but so as to abide in, thoughts of just men. (2) God called us, says the apostle to the Thessalonians, not for uncleanness, but in sanctification, which similarly is far stronger than , to. (3) Peter calls on the Christian Jews, in their faith, to supply or have also virtue, in virtue, knowledge, &c.; as Paul reminds the Corinthians, God hath called us in peace.

It remains clear then that the unbelieving husband is sanctified in virtue of the Christian wife, and the children holy, to the relief of those that were troubled by scruples from God's judgment of such a state of things among the Jews. God's grace in the gospel reverses the sentence of the law, to the pure making pure what had hitherto been unclean. Otherwise it might have seemed the duty of the believing husband to have put away his unbelieving wife and their children, as Gentile admixture was abhorrent to the law. Hence the apostle keeps up the language of the Jewish ceremonial, even where he determines the question by God's gracious and holy sanction of such marriages and their offspring, in contrast with the obligation of the Jews as shown in Ezra and Nehemiah.

We have now the question raised of separation on the part of the unbeliever. “But if the unbelieving separateth himself, let him be separated. The brother or the sister1 is not in bondage in such [circumstances]: but God hath called us2 in peace. For what knowest thou, O wife, if thou shalt save thy husband? or what knowest” thou, O husband, if thou shalt save thy wife? Only3 as the Lord4 divided5 to each, as God6 hath called each, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the assemblies.” (Ver. 15-17.) Thus, if the unbelieving party in the relationship were to sever himself from the other, the believer is released from bondage, be it the brother or the sister in the case. Not that such an act on the unbeliever's side gives to the believer thus abandoned license to marry, but that the believer is thereby left the more free to serve the Lord by the other's separation. Such a union after all is apt to involve strife, the natural man hating the life of the Spirit. Not that this would justify anything on the believer's part to break the marriage tie: the unbeliever is supposed to have broken it of himself or even herself; and “in peace hath God called us,” (or “you,") not to seek separation. On the contrary, whatever the trial involved in such a life, the brother or the sister must earnestly desire the salvation of the unbeliever; but this after all is in God's disposal. “For what knowest thou, woman, if thou shalt save the husband? or what knowest thou, husband, if thou shalt save the wife?” If it were so, what a joy! We have to acquiesce therefore in the ordering of the Lord and as we should on no account take the initiative into our own hands, so also to save the unbeliever is a question, and should not swamp everything else. Thus the apostle even here cautions by pressing the rule, whatever the issue: “Only as the Lord divided to each, as God hath called each, so let him walk.” This was intended to guard against undue or excessive, feeling. Our place is one of intelligent subjection, owning the Lord's allotment and God's call: the one at the time of conversion, the other the permanent condition. So was each to walk. If Judaism enfeebled, Christianity strengthened a sense of relationship, and meets every difficulty and complication in grace. Nor was the apostle laying down anything peculiar on the Corinthians because of their peculiar circumstances: “So I ordain in all the assemblies.” There may be ever so many assemblies, but the order of all is one, and apostolic authority is universal. Nothing is more opposed to its trite idea than ecclesiastical independency. The notion of different bodies, each with a distinct regimen, is a modern invention, while the assumption of a continual power of regulation in or over the church may be ancient but is no better. Neither the one nor the other was “from the beginning,” when the foundation was laid by the apostles and prophets. There is no authoritative regulation now outside the word of God, though the Lord raises up those that guide and take the lead, but they, as all, are bound by scripture to which the Spirit answers in power.

It will be seen that the authorized version following the common text inverts the true relationships here. It is God that has called, the Lord that divided, not the converse, as in what is known as the Received Text.

“Was any one called circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Hath any one been called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping God's commandments. Let each abide in that calling in which he was called. Wast thou called [as] a bondman? Let it not be a care to thee; but if also thou canst be free, use [it] rather. For the bondman called in [the] Lord is [the] Lord's freedman: likewise he that was called free is Christ's bondman. Ye were bought with a price; become not bondmen of men. Brethren, wherein each was called, in this let him abide with God.” (Vers. 18-24.) Christ thus raises the Christian superior to all circumstances. Hence, when called of God, it is not worth while to change. Why should the circumcised man care to disguise or obliterate the fact of his circumcision? Why should the uncircumcised seek or submit to it? It is no longer a question of distinctions in the flesh. What God values, and what the Christian should, is keeping His commandments, not forms of truth or schools of doctrine, which are an unquestionable danger. The believer is sanctified to obedience, and this, the obedience of Christ, not that of a Jew, as the apostle of the circumcision himself insists. (1 Peter 1:2.) So does the apostle of the uncircumcision here.

But we are led somewhat farther. “In the calling in which each was called, in this let him abide. Wast thou a bondman? Let it” (that is, the bondage) “not be a care to thee, But if also thou canst be free, use it” (that is, the freedom) “rather.” I am aware that many in ancient (Chrysostom, Theodoret, Oecum. Phot., &c.,) and in modern (Bengal, De Wette, Estius, Meyer, &c.) times take this last verse (21) quite differently, supposing it to mean, Even if thou canst be free, use it rather (that is, the bondage). Prefer to be a slave rather than a freeman. This however appears not only to be extravagant, but to make the human circumstances of too much weight, as if slavery were more favorable for Christian walk than freedom. Yet even the Syriac so construed the words; and such is the view taken in one of the most recent of English versions. The true sense is given in the authorized Bible; and such was the conviction of the Reformers and of most since the Reformation.

It may be well to notice here the grounds of the question. The Dean of Canterbury thus argues for the sense of remaining rather in slavery: “This rendering.... is required by the usage of the particles, -by which, see Hartung, Partikel-lehre, i. 139, the , ‘also' or ‘even,' does not belong to the , as in , but is spread over the whole contents of the concessive clause.... It is also required by the context: for the burden of the whole passage is, Let each man remain in the state in which he was called.'“ It is remarkable that the same commentator, in his note on Mark 14:29, seems to reverse this statement, and says that the before intensifies the whole hypothesis; the after intensifies only that word which it introduces in the hypothesis, citing Klotz on Devar. p. 519 f. (I cite from the fifth edition of both vols.) Allowing however that the latter is incorrect, I maintain that the principle is quite consistent with the ordinary version and view. For the effect of following is in some cases simply to emphasize the verb that follows; whereas , were this the reading, would really be more in favor of the sense desired. For we should then translate it, Wert thou called, a slave? Let it not trouble then; but even if thou canst become free, use it [that is, slavery] rather. But these very epistles to the Corinthians furnish plain instances, which prove what is just affirmed. Thus, in 1 Cor. 4:7, the Dean gives (New Testament newly compared, 1870) “if thou didst receive.” As Madvig observes, the is often best rendered by the emphatic present or past (do, did), or emphatic auxiliary. So 2 Cor. 4:8, 16; 5:16; 7:8 (three times), 12; xi. 6, 15; xii. 11. In every case the right rendering is “if also” where an additional fact is intended; “if even” or “though” where it is not. In the text under discussion the apostle meets the question as to one called while a slave by the answer, Let it [that is, , understood from the preceding) not be a care to thee; as he meets the added supposition, but if also thou canst be free, which of course might occasionally be, rather use it (that is, , understood from the preceding .). The context is in no way decisive against this; for as abiding in the marriage state has the exceptional provision for separation enforced by the unbeliever, so for the slave there is the analogous provision for the use and even preference of freedom. Manifestly too if the unmarried have an advantage in being less divided in caring for the things of the Lord, a similar remark tells perhaps as much in favor of the freeman compared with the slave. (See vers. 82-85.) The objections urged are null. Thus is in its right position here, not after . Again, is required rather than , as one may see by comparing 2 Cor. 4:16, and Phil. 2:17. Nor is a demonstrative needed after , more than before . The imputation of inconsistency with the general context and with verse 22 in particular has been already disposed of; the depreciation of the prevalent view of the apostolic precept as “worldly wisdom” is as unjust, as it seems important to rescue this teaching from the total absence of sobrietyimplied in the preference of slavery to freedom. Gal. 3:28, and 1 Cor. 7:29-31, are quite consistent, and with one equally as the other. Nor is there any weight in the argument as to , the import of which suits the use of freedom as a new thing no less than slavery as an old. Besides, it was meant to express not the act of entrance on freedom, implied in , but of using it when given. Indeed it is evident that, as the other view of

slavery, . is a hard or vague phrase, and thus differently understood by Bengel, &c., of late, as compared with Chrysostom of old.

The apostle explains, “For the bondman that was called in [the] Lord is [the] Lord's freedman.” Such is the correct force, “freedman” rather than freeman. means one who was made free, not who was free born. It is the accurate term here, and it is the more emphatic, because freeman or free-born () follows immediately. “Likewise he that was called [being] free is Christ's bondman.” Christ alone puts every one in his place and true light: emancipation by human means cannot effect or approach it. The Christian slave is the Lord's freeman; the Christian freeman is Christ's slave. The Lord's authority breaks the fetters of the one to his faith; the grace of Christ reduces the other to slavery for his heart. “Ye were bought with a price.” Whether it be the freeman or the bondman, all were bought. The saints are the purchase of Christ's blood: so indeed is all the world; but believers alone acknowledge it, and they are called to act on it. “Be [or come] not slaves of men:” an exhortation as incumbent on the free as on the slave. A single eye alone secures true service, and yet is perfect liberty. They were already serving the Lord Christ: only so can the Christian serve aright in any case.7 Strange to say, none are so prone to slip into human bondage as those who profess the Lord's name: so the second Epistle to the Corinthians shows. But this was real forgetfulness of Christ and unfaithfulness to Him. Christianity in its true power brings into responsibility no less than into liberty, and as this is true in doctrine, so it is of all consequence to be remembered in practice. “Wherein each was called, brethren, in this let him abide with God.” “The calling” appears to mean a man's providential condition when called of God, as here we see it applied to circumcision or uncircumcision, freedom or slavery, not earthly occupations, commonly supposed, some of which might involve not a little that would clash with God's word and offend a Christian's conscience. Here all pleas for continuance in evil, because one was converted by God's grace spite of them, is effectually cut off, for the believer is called to abide “with God.” If one cannot continue with God, it is high time to ask His direction who assuredly never calls a saint to do evil but to cease from it at all cost.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 7:1-14, Notes on

We now enter on a fresh division of the Epistle, though the opening of it is naturally connected with, at least, so as to follow, the apostle's exhortation to personal purity, which he has just shown to be due to the Holy Ghost's presence, as well as the Lord's purchase of us: our consequent call is to glorify God in our body.

It seems that the saints in Corinth had written, among other topics, about marriage, and the various questions it naturally raised for the Christians as yet little versed in the truth. From the laxity of heathen, especially of the Greeks, and, above all, the Corinthians, there was a reaction toward asceticism, that favorite resource of moralists and philosophers in the East, which had thence spread, more or less, into the West. The apostle urges holiness, but not at the expense of liberty in Christ.

“But concerning the things of which ye write to me, [it is] good for a man not to touch a woman; but on account of fornications, let each have his own wife, and each have her own husband. To the wife let the husband render his due, and likewise also the wife to the husband. The wife hath not authority over her own body, but the husband; and likewise also the husband hath not authority over his own body, but the wife. Defraud not one another, unless by consent for a time, that ye may have leisure for prayer, and again be together, that Satan tempt you not because of your incontinency.” (Ver. 1-5.)

When Adam was made, Jehovah said, It is not good that the than should be alone: I will make him a help meet for him. And so He builded the woman out of the man. They were to be, and were, one flesh. The apostle was the last man to weaken the order of nature. It was he who still later wrote to the Hebrews, Let marriage be every way honorable, and the bed undefiled. He in no way contradicts it, or differs, here. He is in full unison with his Master, in Matt. 19 and Mark 10, who vindicated God's original institution from creation for man in the flesh, whatever the law might allow in view of the hardness of men's hearts, though he maintained the superior excellence of the unmarried state, where there was power to be undividedly for the Lord and His things. But it is not so with every saint. All cannot receive it, but those to whom it has been given. If any one is able, let him receive it: if he boast, he is in danger of dishonoring the Lord more than those he despises. The Lord and His apostle both caution souls. Grace may call and strengthen to live above what is not only lawful but honorable every way; and surely, if kept thus in lowliness, the former is the better portion.

But there are snares through nature as it is; and nowhere was there reason to fear more from the habits and associations of the place than at Corinth. Heathenism in some cases consecrated fornication. Because of the licentious ways, there and then of the commonest occurrence, but at all times a danger, let each have his own wife, and each have her own husband. Mutual consideration to the last degree becomes both in a relationship where they that were two are no longer so, but one. Grace, if it lift above nature in certain cases for the Lord's glory, enforces the honor and duties of those who are in a natural relationship. It is the sure mark of the enemy, where grace is perverted, to put contempt on the least or lowest ordering of God. If we are in the relationship, we are bound to be true to its claims. Hence the husband was to pay her due to the wife, and in like manner the wife to the husband. The married estate is inconsistent with independence of each other in all that pertains to it. The wife has not authority over her own body, but the husband; and in like manner also the husband has not authority over his own body, but the wife. Hence they were not to defraud or wrongfully deprive one another, unless by consent, for a time, that they might be free for prayer, and again his together, lest Satan should tempt them for their incontinency. The law made nothing perfect. Christ vindicated God's mind and will as to the first man, but Himself was the manifestation of God in man. So does the apostle speak of marriage in words far above the thoughts and ways of Israel. What is first was never so fully stated before; but grace, as ever, presents, a better thing.

“But this I say by way of permission, not by way of command. Now I wish all men to he even as myself; but each hath his own gift of God, one this way, and another that: But I say to the unmarried and to widows: It is good for them that they remain even as I. But if they have not self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn.” (Vers. 6-9.) thus did the Holy Spirit lead the large-hearted apostle to write, in what he had laid down, declaring that it was not as a commandment, put a permission. His own wish for others was that all should be even is himself. But he does not overlook that each has as God gives him. Hence to the unmarried and to widows he says, it is good for them to remain even as he; yet even then not absolutely, but only in case they can without fear of sinning in this respect.

“But to the married, not I enjoin, but the Lord, that wife be not separated from husband (but if also she be separated, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband), and that husband leave [or put away] not wife.” (Vers. 10,11.) Here it was no fresh direction from apostolic authority, but the ruling of the Lord Himself, already known, the general duty of man and wife, grounded on the

indissolubleness of the tie. Wife was not to be parted from husband, nor husband to dismiss wife: if parted, she was to abide unmarried, or be reconciled, for, even if she were with out fault; separation is a reproach and might be a snare.

Next we have the apostle inspired to add light as to present difficulties, and this not at all a repetition of the principle for Israel, but in contrast with it. “But to the rest I say, not the Lord, If any brother have an unbelieving wife, and she consent to dwell with him, let him not leave [or put away] her; and a woman which hath an unbelieving husband, and he consents to dwell with her, let her not leave [or put away] him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife,1 and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother;2 since then your children are unclean, but now are they holy.” (Vers. 12-14.) Here it was the grave question of mixed marriages, where one of the parties already united, and not the other, had been won to Christ by the gospel. In this the grace of Christianity is strikingly contradistinguished from the rigor of Judaism. (Compare Ezra 9:10.) One of the ways in which Israel abode a holy people was in refusing to mix with the heathen in marriage. Those who thus intermarried, or took strange wives, were polluted, and their children were unclean; when they felt and judged the sin, they proved it by not only offering a ram for the trespass but putting both away. The holiness of the Christian is not only intrinsic, instead of being fleshly and external, but there is a far more gracious consideration, and a largeness, of which the law knew little or nothing. Thus, if husband or wife were a believer, he or she was not defiled by union with the unbeliever, but contrariwise the unbeliever is sanctified, and the children are holy.

In this way does the Spirit of God comfort the believer whose wife or husband, as the case might be, still remained an unbeliever; for I presume it was as true of an Israelite as of a heathen. It was, of course, a grievous trial to be so united. If the believer were the wife, she might be suspected and thwarted at every turn by her unbelieving husband. He would naturally be vigilant that the children should be kept from Christian truth and privileges of every kind, and would himself show his contempt for that which his wife valued, resenting above all the calm confidence of faith that counted idols nothing and confessed the Lord Jesus before men. But she is here instructed and strengthened by the apostolic injunction. If her husband consented to dwell with her, spite of that confession, she was not called to quit or put away her unbelieving husband, for he was sanctified in her, as the children were holy. What a relief this must have been to godly but scrupulous souls, who had been brought to God by the gospel, after being married to Gentiles or Jews, with children brought up in Judaism or idolatry! Were they troubled when they read in the scriptures that of old the requirement was to abandon the ill-assorted wife and the children so born? The grace of the gospel, as the apostle shows, delivers from all uncertainty as to God's mind, and pronounces the unbeliever, whether husband or wife, to be sanctified in the believing correlative, and the children holy, not profane.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 6:1-11, Notes on

We have now to encounter a worldly evil among the Corinthian saints, as distinguished from the fleshly state and the corruption which have already passed before us.

“Dare any of you having a matter against another, go to law [seek judgment] before the unjust and not before the saints?” (Ver. 1.) Here modern practice, or even thought, greatly differs from apostolic principle. Christians now-a-days have little conscience in appealing to a worldly tribunal. It is evident that the Holy Ghost felt it to be an outrage, nor could any Christian walking rightly think of prosecuting a suit before the world against another however wrong. He must forget what God accounts each to be: the world, as having rejected His Son; the saints, as those that are by grace separated from it to God.

Here, however, the apostle grounds his reproof on the anomaly of seeking judgment at the hands of those whom we shall judge at Christ's coming. “1Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are ye unworthy of the least judgments? Do ye not know that we shall judge angels? Much more things of this life. If then ye have judgments in thing of this life, set up those who are of no esteem in the church.” (Ver. 2-4.) The apostle thus brings in the light of the coming day to bear upon present matters. This is certain from verse 3, if any one could question verse 2. In vain the efforts of ancients (Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret, &c.) to make it moral, or of moderns (Mosheim, Rosenmiller, &c.) to make it political and worldly. The future judgment of the quick in the kingdom of our Lord is a reality that acts on the apostle now. He uses it to judge the conduct of every day. How can it be a living truth if it operate not thus? Even the Corinthians did not doubt the fact as to the future; but, like all unspiritual persons, they had let it slip where they ought to have remembered it.

It is evident, however, that “that day” was a truth so familiar, and admitted on all sides by the saints, that Paul could reason from it as unquestionable. The saints have the same life now, and the same Spirit; they have also the word of God. How monstrous then thus to ignore the glory with Christ to which grace calls them, and to fall into the ways of men! To faith it was the grossest inconsistency; for if the world is judged by the saints, are they unworthy of the “least judgments?” Such were and are the questions on which men usually go to law. Nor is it only the world but other beings they would judge. “Know ye not that we shall judge angels? Much more things in this life.”

The future judgment of the world and of angels has slipped away from Christians generally. They believe in the judgment of the dead, not of the living; and hence the ground of the apostle's appeal no longer exists for them. Scriptures such as these become unreal to their minds. So far they are practically infidel; and necessarily their practice is worldly in this respect. Alas! it is only a sample, not an exception. The difficult times of the last days are come, when men are lovers of self and of money, boastful and arrogant, abusive and disobedient to parents, lovers of pleasure rather than of God, having a form of piety but denying its power. From these we are commanded to turn away. Scripture is the grand resource; and this, not forgetting the apostle's conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecution, suffering, and the certainty that all who desire to live piously in Christ shall be persecuted, while wicked men and impostors grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. The time is come, when men will not bear sound teaching, but according to their own lusts will heap up to themselves teachers, having itching ears, turning away from the truth as decidedly as they have turned aside to fables. What more mischievous delusion than a millennium to be brought in by the church's testimony and labors? It will really follow divine judgment when the Lord Himself comes, who, after executing it, will pour out the Spirit afresh on all flesh, when they see the salvation of God.

The Corinthians were not so far gone as the Christians of our day. They were well aware that the saints shall judge the world: only selfishness had dulled their remembrance of it: The Spirit of God now recalls the truth to them, and appeals to their sense of the evident incongruity that those who are to judge the world on the grandest scale were accounting themselves in fact unworthy of the smallest judgments. Such no doubt were those that could be then for the Corinthian brethren, whereas by-and-by the gravest will be held by them when glorified. And the

apostle makes the inconsistency more pungently felt by characterizing the world as the “unjust” and themselves as “the saints” nay, by reminding them that we shall judge angels. Surely then things pertaining to this life between brethren ought not to go farther! Where was their faith and their love? Where their hope?

Some interpreters, as we know, take verse 4 interrogatively, others sarcastically. There seems no particular reason for the former. Matters of this life require no more than good sense and honesty; and surely the possession of these would not constitute a claim for honor in the church. Brethren might have both, and be little esteemed there, where the grace and power of Christ alone constitute such a claim. The decision of those matters in no way called for high spirituality. Indeed the apostle says, “I speak to your shame. Thus there is not among you one wise [man] who shall be able to decide between brethren” (literally, “brother [and brother] “). “But brother goeth to law with brother and this before unbelievers. Already therefore2 it is altogether a fault in you that ye go to law among yourselves. Why are ye not rather wronged? why are ye not rather defrauded? But ye do wrong and defraud, and this,3 brethren.” (Ver. 5-8.)

It is clear that the apostle in no way wished such disputes to be brought, in the first instance at least, before the assembly. The gravest cases should be, not lighter ones. Had they not even one wise man to decide them? He is slighting such questions as well as reproving themselves for their worldliness; and their moral state was worse to him than their lack of wisdom. The Christian is called to suffer, even when he does well, and to take it patiently, not to go to law. The Corinthians were sadly forgetful of the true glory of the church; and when Christians thus forget their proper standing and the conduct that suits it, they cease to walk even as upright men should: “Ye do wrong and defraud, and this, brethren.” Nor is it so surprising, when we consider that it never was intended that Christians should walk well except by faith, any more than Peter could walk on the waves without looking to Christ. When he ceased to look to Him, he begins to sink at once, less safe than those who had never ventured out of the ship.

Failure in faith and hope too, I must repeat, will soon be found to involve failure in love. “Ye do wrong and defraud, and this, brethren.” All through from first to last, it was a direct dishonor to God, and a false testimony to their relationship to Him, if indeed they were born of God. His sense of their failure as Christians does not lessen his horror at the dishonesty or other wrong which provoked the law-suits. “Know ye not that unjust [men] shall not inherit God's kingdom? Do not err: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor abusers of themselves as women, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor rapacious, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit God's kingdom.” (Vers. 9, 10.) It is clear that the apostle, without confining himself to the actual case, is exposing severely the habits so common at Corinth—corruption much more than violence. He is speaking for profit and for solemn warning as the Holy Ghost always does, if He touches sin at all. He is not beating the air, nor denouncing sins only found elsewhere. Fleshly and worldly license would surely end, if unjudged, in revolting excesses. Tampering with a little evil is the straight road to more and worse, and in none so certainly as the professing Christian. To indulge in any evil is in works to deny Christ. The business of a Christian is to manifest Him. The Corinthian saints were in danger of slipping back into the vilest ways of human corruption.

“And these things were some of you.” This would give Satan an advantage if they looked away from Christ. Old habits then resume their power, and evil communications corrupt good manners. Then he adds, “But ye were washed” [literally, “had yourselves washed “], “but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus [Christ]4 and by the Spirit of our God.” (Ver. 11.) He reminds them of the gracious power of God in Christ on whom they believed by the action of His Spirit; and will not allow that this could be all in vain. In (there may be an allusion to the administrative sign, as in Acts 22:16; but the connection here points rather to the reality signified. The sanctification is clearly the setting apart of the Christian to God which the Holy Spirit effects in conversion, rather than the practical holiness which He afterward works to make good, the former being absolute as the latter is relative. This is shown conclusively by its preceding justification, which has here of course its regular sense, when the soul is not only born of God, but stands acquitted of all charge before Him through the work of Christ, and is then sealed by the Spirit.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, Notes on

The apostle turns next to fleshly abuses: the first in respect of meats, the second and gravest in fornication. He had shown that, whatever the grace of God is in calling the vilest, all such are saved after a holy sort. This he now exemplifies in two instances where some pleaded liberty to deny practical purity. Of this he will not hear. He will not diminish liberty one jot, but he asserts its character to be Christian, as all our other privileges are. If not of Christ, it is sin. So is it with all we boast: life, righteousness, peace, and glory. In this liberty differs not from the rest. What Christian could wish any of these in or for the flesh? It would be to abandon the Second man for the first: to wish license for sin proves utter lack of love and honor for the Savior.

“All things are lawful to me, but all things do not profit; all things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God will bring to naught both it and them; but the body [is] not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised the Lord, and will raise up us by his power. Know ye not, that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then taking the members of Christ make [them] members of a harlot? Let it not be. What!1 Know ye not that he that is joined to the harlot is one body? For, saith he, the two [shall be] one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin which a man may practice is outside the body, but the fornicator sinneth against his own body. What! Know ye not that your body2 is a temple of the Holy Spirit that [is] in you, and that ye are not your own? ye were bought with a price: do then glorify God in your body.”3 (Ver. 12-20.)

If all things are lawful to the Christian, certainly all do not profit. As Christ never did what did not profit, so neither should the Christian. He is free, but it is only according to Christ for good, and this in love, the good of others. But there is another guard: if all things are lawful to the Christian, he refuses to be brought under the power of anything: were it not so, it would be bondage, not liberty. Thus to have regard for others' good must be kept up, as well the liberty itself intact. The Christian is called to serve others, never to be the slave of a habit in anything great or small.

The first application of the apostle is to meats, which he deals with in terms so curtly contemptuous as to decide the question for every godly soul. “Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God will bring to naught both it and them.” He then points out an analogy as forcible as it is surprising and withal no less true: they mutually suit one another, and both perish under God's dealing. They are but temporary. It was the more striking, as coming through one who had been a Jew to those who had been Gentiles; and all know the place meats had in Judaism.

But Christianity brings in the light of God and of the future for our present guidance; as we see in the second case still more at length. For “the body is not for fornication but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.” If the belly is put down to its true and passing use, the body is exalted to a place of which philosophy knew nothing. As it was not formed for unhallowed or promiscuous indulgence, so it is for the Lord and the Lord is for it. Never was the honor of the body set in its true light till Christ came and proved it not only in His own person as man but in ours as redeemed by His blood and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. (Compare Rom. 6:12, 18, 19; 8:10; 12:1; Col. 2:23; 1 Thess. 4:4; 5:28; 1 Tim. 4:8-5.) Even now the Lord disdains not this temple of the Spirit: how much less when changed into the likeness of His glory? (Rom. 8:11, 18-28; Phil. 3:21.) In this body we shall have the portion of our Lord. For” God both raised the Lord and will raise up us by His power.” (See 1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor. 4:14.)

It is not merely that our spirits go to be with the Lord in heaven: our bodies shall be raised like His at His coming, as many bodies of the saints which slept arose and came out of their graves after His resurrection. For if death shows man's weakness, resurrection displays God's power. The actual spiritual effect of this is immense. Not our souls but our bodies are deplored to be members of Christ. Those who descant on the soul only may claim a superior elevation. But it is never really so in practice or in theory. On the contrary the immortality of the soul is easily perverted to man's pride; not so the resurrection, which not only exalts God and humbles man, but delivers from present ease and indulgence where it is held in faith. Of this the Holy Spirit is the earnest, who joins us to the Lord and constitutes our bodies members of Christ. Hence the enormity of fornication. (Vers. 15, 16.) How basely inconsistent with such intimacy, yea union, is impurity with a harlot! It was the more needful to urge this on a city more than any other noted for this sort of license, besides the broad. fact that the heathen in general regarded fornication as an indifferent act like eating and not as in itself a sin. “The two, saith he, shall be one flesh; but he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.” (Vers. 16, 17.)

But its incongruity with our relation to Christ is not all that the apostle urges. Fornication he would have avoided earnestly, because of its peculiar character, differing as it does from every other sin in this that it is against the body itself, while others are external to it. How dreadful then to think not merely of the body so misused, but the Christian's body, temple of the Holy Spirit as it is! not from any mere consecration to Him but from His being in us, and this from God, on the ground of purchase by Christ's blood. Therefore the apostle's appeal to glorify God in their body.

It was only because of Christ's work that the Holy Spirit could thus be given to us and dwell in us. He quickened souls before Christ shed His blood, but He never sealed them till after. Jesus, the Holy One of God, is the sole example of man so sealed without blood. But He is the exception that proves the rule. Adam was not, because, though innocent, he was not holy nor is ever said to have been; the Second man was, and only He apart from redemption; and therefore was He sealed by God the Father in virtue and witness of His intrinsic perfection. If we can be and are, it is solely in virtue of being perfected by His one offering; and we are therefore exhorted not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption (that is, of our bodies). The Spirit given is the expression of God's love shed abroad in our hearts; He is also the measure by which we should try our conduct, and the power of enjoying and representing Christ aright. Bought then, so that we are not our own but God's, we are called accordingly to glorify God in our body. A wondrous foot to be assured of on divine authority that such as we by grace can and should glorify God! These are the motives. We are bought with a price, and we have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us. But let us not forget that it is in our body we are to glorify God: Many a one deceives himself in the thought that he is all right in spirit, though he dare not say that he keeps his body under and brings it into subjection. The Christian is bound to glorify God in his body.

So in the consecration of the priests under the law (Lev. 8) we may see that the washing of water preceded the putting on of blood, and the anointing of oil closed the matter. It is just the same order of truth which is desirable here, and which is true of the Christian in fact. Then followed the duties of their office according to the instructions of the Lord; as we see the Christian exhorted to glorify God.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, Notes on

THE apostle now lays down the direction of the Lord as to unworthy confessors of His name in the assembly. Those at Corinth did not know how such should be dealt with; but why did they not at least pray and mourn? Why were they puffed up?

“I have written to you in the epistle not to mix with fornicators;1 not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or the covetous and2 rapacious, or idolatrous, since [in that case] ye must go out of the world. But now I have written to you, if any one called a brother be3 a fornicator, or covetous, or idolatrous, or abusive, or a drunkard, or rapacious, not to mix with [him], with such an one not even to eat. For what is it to me to judge those without?4 Do ye not judge those within? But those without God judgeth.5 Put6 out the wicked person from among your own selves.” (Vers. 9-13.)

There appears no sufficient reason a priori, why an inspired apostle might not have written an epistle which God meant to lapse after accomplishing Its end, without filling a constant place in the scriptures. Hence there would be no difficulty, to my mind, if allusion were here made to an epistle of Paul which was never included in the canon. But where is the evidence that this is the fact, or that any other epistle is here intended than the one he is writing? In the latter case, the tense used would he what is called the epistolary aorist. It is in vain then to say, “not this present epistle,” which the phrase means as naturally as a former letter which has not come down to us. (Compare Rom. 16:22; Col. 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; 2 Thess. 3:14.) Indeed 2 Cor. 7:8 is the only instance that exemplifies a reference to a former letter, as the context necessitates, where the contrast is plain between the two letters. But there is nothing of the sort to determine here. As the usage the other way is far more frequent, so the sense is excellent, if we understand the actual epistle we have to be in view. The notion of a previous letter involves the inference that, the present is a correction of their misunderstanding of a former command of his respecting keeping company with fornicators; but this appears gratuitous. So is the idea that there must be something in the preceding part of this epistle bearing on the point; for it is quite sufficient for the passage that he should be so instructing, them now. That he must be referring to what went before is simply to deny the epistolary sense of the aorist. Again, , far from being irrelevant and superfluous, if he meant the letter in which he was now engaged, is full of force and precision. “I have written to you in [not “an” but] the epistle not to keep company with fornicators.” He was exhorting to this effect now. This he proceeds to qualify: “not absolutely [or in all cases] with the fornicators of this world, or the covetous and rapacious, or idolatrous, since [in that case] ye must go out of the world. But now [or as the case stands] I have written to you not to keep company, if any one called a brother be,” &c. Here the same tense is used for what must be allowed to be what he is going to say in the

present epistle; the only serving to distinguish the guarded sentence, a more definite application of the principle in verse 11, from the general statement in verse 9.

In short, the apostle is showing that brotherly intercourse is restricted to brethren, and so is discipline: to extend either to men of the world is false ground, and would make intercourse with people at large impossible. Christian companionship, on the other hand, demands purity of life on the part of those who enjoy it. If any one called a brother be impure, or covetous, or idolatrous, or abusive, or a drunkard, or rapacious, one is not to mix with him: “with such an one not even to eat.” The meaning is, not that we ought not to take the Lord's supper, but not to eat the least meal with him. The corrupt or violent professor of Christ is to be avoided even in an ordinary social act, not merely on the most solemn occasion of Christian worship.

The closing verses explain why this limitation ought to be. “For what [have] I [to] do with judging those without? Do not ye judge those within? But those without God judgeth. Put out the wicked person from among your own selves.” (Vers. 12, 13.) The world is not the sphere of divine judgment as yet, but His children, whom the Father judges without respect of persons, as the church is bound to do. By-and-by the world will be not only judged but condemned. (1 Cor. 11) Therefore should the believer so much the more seek to judge himself: also grace would be of ill report, and seek to cloak evil. But even if he fail, the Lord does not, who chastens by a divine judgment that he should not be condemned with the world.

Those without, then, are not the actual arena for apostolic or church judgment, but those within, as God deals with the rest in due time. The church cannot evade their duty; strong or weak, they must stand clear in this respect before God. The saints may not be able to deliver to Satan, but are bound to put out from among themselves the wicked person. But they are not called on to put out any one who is not “wicked.'

There are other steps in discipline which should never be forgotten, as rebuke in some cases, and withdrawment in others. It is false and mischievous that every offender should be thus removed; none should be but the wicked. In their case it is imperative, otherwise communion no longer exists according to Christ. It is not the entrance of the worst possible evil that destroys the character of the assembly, but the deliberate toleration of evil, were it even the least. Only we have to take care in judging that it be done in the word and Spirit of God. Unity that subsists by allowing known evil in its midst is of Satan, and directly opposed to God's object in His assembly, which is responsible to reflect the character of Christ now in holiness, as it will by-and-by in glory.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, Notes on

As yet the Corinthians had no sense how they themselves were implicated in this frightful evil, and, what is more important, how the Lord's name was compromised by it. On the contrary they were high-minded, and levity prevailed. “Therefore,” says the apostle, “your boasting [is] not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, according as ye are unleavened. For also our passover, Christ, was sacrificed. Wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth.” (Ver. 6-8.)

There cannot be a more serious principle for the practical and public walk of the church. Evil is here presented under the symbol of leaven. Not only may it exist among-saints, but its nature is to work, spread, and assimilate the mass to itself. The apostle insists that it shall never be tolerated. Here it is moral evil, in Galatians doctrinal; and, of the two, the latter is the more insidious, because more specious. It does not shock the conscience so immediately, or strongly, if at all. To the natural mind, evil doctrine is but a difference of opinion, and the generous heart shrinks from proscribing a man for an opinion however erroneous. The church stands on wholly different ground, because it stands in Christ on high and has the Holy Ghost dwelling in it here below. No assembly can guarantee itself against the entrance of evil, but every assembly of God is bound not to tolerate it. When evil is known, the church is bound to put it away. Elsewhere we may find details in dealing with it. There are those who may be specially fitted not only to discern but to apply moral power, and they are responsible to act faithfully to Christ whose the church is. It is no question, where known evil is persisted in, of exercising compassion, still less of cloaking it. This would be connivance with Satan against the Lord, and the ruin, not only of the individual already ensnared, but of the assembly. When the assembly knows evil, and either forbears to judge through indifference, or (still worse) refuses it when appealed to according to the word of God, it is playing false to the name of the Lord, and can no longer be regarded as God's assembly after adequate means to arouse have failed.

Bad as the state of things in Corinth was, the evil had arrived at no such footing as yet. It was humbling that their consciences were not yet wakened up beyond perhaps individuals, who communicated facts to the apostle or others who sympathized with their uneasiness. The mass, if they knew, acted as if they knew not, and were proud and puffed up instead of being abased in sorrow but in prayer to God. So early did the notion creep in that sin in the church belongs only to those directly guilty, that it does not involve all, and that the Lord Himself forbids others to judge, commanding tares and wheat to grow together till the harvest. It is scarcely needful here to expose such unholy and ignorant sophistry.

Now comes the grave warning of the apostle, in Christ's faithful love to the church. The tolerance of evil in any part vitiates the whole. It virtually commits the. Holy Ghost to the sanction of what God hates. No interpretation can be more contrary to the spirit of the apostle's admonition than that which supposes that the whole is only leavened when every part is saturated with the leaven. It is really meant that a little leaven gives its character to the whole lump. Even the late Dean Alford, (though far from sound generally in doctrine, strict in ecclesiastical principle, or firm for the glory of Christ) speaks incomparably better than those brethren who debase the holy name of love to mean license for their friends or themselves. “That this is the meaning,” says he, “and not that a little leaven will if not purged out leaven the whole lump, is manifest from the point in hand, namely, the inconsistency of their boasting: which would not appear by their danger of corruption hereafter, but by their character being actually lost. One of them was a fornicator of a fearfully depraved kind, tolerated and harbored: by this fact the character of the whole was tainted."1 (Comment. on 1 Cor. 5)

The apostle therefore charges them to purge out the old leaven, that they might be fresh dough, “according as ye are unleavened.” This is of high importance. The saints are unleavened, not merely ought to be. Their practical conduct is grounded on their standing. All efforts to deny the purity of the church are from the enemy. The apostle, writing even to the Corinthians, reminds them of this, and insists upon it. He recalls them to what God's grace had done for them. He rouses their conscience to act consistently with Christ. Never does he think of allowing sin,

because saints have the old man as well as the new. Was not the old man crucified with Christ? If God has already executed sentence upon it, there is no excuse for allowing it. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set every believer free. Not only has he a new nature, but the Holy Ghost to work in it by the word and grace of Christ. They were unleavened then and must purge out the old leaven. The very object of God was to form the church in purity for Christ and according to Christ in this world, and the responsibility of the saints is to walk individually and corporately according to Him. His word makes His will plain.

But the figure of an unleavened lump at once recalls Christ as the tine paschal lamb, and the consequent putting away of sin by His sacrifice. This deepens the ground on which the apostle demands that sin should be judged by the saints if through unwatchfulness anyone had fallen into sin and repented not. The feast of unleavened bread was bound up with the passover, as every Israelite knew. This is turned to practical account here. “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened [bread] of sincerity and truth.” There might be new forms of evil besides those of old habits and associations. But as all leaven had to be shut out by the Jew, so the Christian is solemnly called to deal unsparingly with evil in every shape.

Further, it seems to me of some importance to remark that this does not mean only at the table of the Lord on His day. The seven days of the Jewish institution represent the whole term of our stay on earth; and the celebration of the feast covers therefore the fall time of each here below. Nothing inconsistent with Christ morally is tolerable in the Christian, and this not now and then but continuously. Such is the teaching of these types which the New Testament unveils and enforces. Beyond doubt the true light now shines. Redemption, far from allowing of sins in the redeemed, is the basis of holiness, and all evil was only then fully judged when Christ our passover was crucified. Before that how much was borne with because of the hardness of men's hearts! Now that it has been condemned in the cross of Christ and consequently in grace to the believer, we are told to yield our members servants to righteousness unto holiness. Freed from sin and become servants to God we have our fruit unto holiness and the end everlasting life. Anything short of this is not Christianity.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, Notes on

Grave reason there was, why the apostle should speak of such an alternative as “a rod.” For the assembly at Corinth had at present no happy name, if common rumor were true.

“Universal report is of fornication among you, and such fornication as [is] not even among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who hath done this deed might be taken out of the midst of you.” (Vers. 1, 2.) It was distressing enough that so monstrous an evil should have found an entrance in. the assembly of God. But what grieved the apostle most—as well it might—was the tolerance of the offender in their midst. The assembly cannot hinder a Christian from falling into the worst scandal, but it is bound to deal with evil as identified with Christ before God and man. Here below this is the reason of its being. It is the temple of God, “as he had urged in chapter 3 for a warning against trashy and corrupting theories; but if that holy habitation of God through the Spirit be inconsistent with false teaching, certainly and yet more manifestly with immorality.. Now there was in their midst grossness beyond the heathen—a brother, so-called, living with his step-mother!

Granted that the Corinthian assembly was young in the knowledge of the Lord, and few, if any, men spiritual experience were among them. Gifts they had abundantly; but elders are nowhere hinted at, as indeed we know they were not, and could not be, in an infantine state of things. And divine wisdom, I doubt not, selected this state rather than one more mature and fully furnished, in order the better to provide for the exigencies of a day like ours.

But surely the youngest saints ought at least to have been appalled at such sin where God's Spirit dwelt. They might have had no special teaching on discipline, nor previous cases of evil, while the apostle was with them. But why did they not mourn that he who had wrought such evil in the assembly might be taken away? Humiliation and prayer are the resource, of those who feel a wrong, and know not yet the remedy: and the Lord would have acted for them, or given them to act for Him. Instead of this they were “puffed up” a grievous aggravation of the mischief. I will not go so far as to assume that the offender was one of those, of whom they were proud, and who helped the carnal multitude to carp at the apostle; but it seems plain enough that the self-exalting doctrine and the bad morality went together in his mind. Had they allowed into their hearts the germ of that unholy idea, so rife in modern and even evangelical circles, that the evil of another is not to be judged, but each is solely to judge himself? It is to the destruction of God's glory in the church. For what can more directly strike at all common union in good, all corporate responsibility in evil? Where such thoughts are suffered, it is plain that the presence of the Holy Ghost is either ignored or forgotten; for no believer will deliberately say that He can be a partner of iniquity, and this He must be if evil is known and unjudged where He dwells.

Seriously, as one familiar with the presence of God, and not like those whose self-esteem or vanity led them to evil in the assembly, does the apostle speak. It was that power of God in which he would have acted if present. “For I, absent in body, but present in spirit, have already judged as present, in the name of our Lord Jesus [Christ], ye and my spirit being gathered together with the power of our Lord Jesus [Christ], [concerning] him that so wrought this—to deliver such an one to Satan for destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” (Ver. 8-5.)

It thoroughly fell within the province of the apostle to help the church at such an emergency, as indeed it was his joy at all times. For an apostle regulated and governed, and in this differed from such as were prophets without being apostles. But here was the assembly at Corinth, his own children in the faith, ensnared into the grossest dishonor on the Lord's name, and withal puffed up, instead of mourning in order that the offender might be removed out of their midst. He proceeds, therefore, to pronounce the only judgment open to such a case. “For I,1 absent in body, but present in spirit, have already judged as present [concerning]2 him that so wrought this.” The best authorities thus give the sense. “As” comes in to modify the second present, not the first, which is sufficiently qualified by “in spirit,” contrasted with “absent in body.” In the second case the very reverse is intended, and “as” is indispensable (for he means as if actually there), whereas in the first it would be improper. He then shows the authority and manner for dealing with the person: “in the name of our3 Lord Jesus (ye being gathered, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus), to deliver such an one to Satan for destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

This has been confounded, especially since Calvin's time, with excommunication. But delivering to Satan is power here associated with the assembly, as the conferring of a gift is in 1 Tim. 4:14 with imposition of the hands of the elderhood. In both cases the result hinges on apostolic power. But the absence of this in no way enfeebles the duty of putting away the guilty professor, as is carefully laid down in verse 18.

Our Lord, indeed, had Himself set forth the principle in Matt. 18, and provided for its maintenance in the worst of times. He had put the assembly, as the last resort, even for a case which began with an individual trespass; for I do not doubt, spite of the omission of , “against thee,” in versa 15 (according to the Sinai and Vatican manuscripts, supported by three cursives, &c.), that they are genuine, resting as they do on most ample ancient authority, and falling in exactly with the context, which is embarrassed by the omission—an omission easily accounted for by the similarity of their sound in a Greek's mouth to the last two syllables of the preceding word. If the matter, then, were told to the assembly, and the offender should not heed it, “let him be to thee as the heathen and the tax-gatherer.” But the Lord gives what is general and abiding: “Verily, I say to you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven.” This goes beyond the enforcement or removal of a sentence on evil to the more general authority of the assembly as acting for Christ. Next, He shows the efficacy of its united prayer, even if but two agreed in asking: “Again, I say to you, that if two of you agree on the earth about whatever they may ask, it shall come to them from my Father that is in the heavens;” and this on a ground which takes in not merely a meeting for judicial decision or prayer, but every assembly of the church as such: “for where two or three are gathered together to my name, there am I in the midst of them.” For the authority of the assembly or the validity of its action in these matters of practice and conduct depends, not in any way on its numbers or the weight of the persons composing it, but on Christ, who guarantees His presence where but two or three are gathered together to His name.

This is clearly urged by the apostle in verse 4. If Satan had sought to alienate the Corinthians from Paul, he at least joins himself in spirit with them, as gathered together with the power of our Lord Jesus, in His name to deliver the incestuous Corinthian to Satan. If flesh had been indulged shamelessly, flesh must be galled and broken to pieces under the adversary's hand, but for good in the end at any rate” that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” In fact, as the second epistle shows, the discipline was blessed to him in this world also; but the end specified cannot fail for all born of God, whatever may be the hindrances here, or the particular shape of God's dealing with the soul. For there is a sin to death, and in this case to make request of God would be an error. In the present instance it was not so, awful as the sin was: and the man not only did not fall asleep, but was brought to the deepest abasement and grief, and the apostle called on the saints to forgive, as doubtless they did.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 4:14-21, Notes on

The apostle, in accepting, yea, claiming, a place of present contempt in the world's eyes for the chief emissaries of the Lord, in contrast” with the ease and honor which the Corinthians lived in and valued, the fruit of the false teaching in their midst, had put the case in such a form as could not fail to appeal, and deeply, to every heart that loved Christ. He now, with the quick sensibility of genuine affection, seeks to reassure them. If he had wounded any, were not his wounds those of, a friend? “Not to abash you do I write these things, but as my beloved children I admonish [you]; for if you should have ten thousand child-guides in Christ, yet not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus, through the gospel, I begot you. I beseech you then, become imitators of me.” (Ver. 14-16.) A false teacher flatters his party, and abuses those who oppose his aims. He who is faithful to the Lord loves the saints; but this very love makes him vigilant, and gives moral courage, to deal with what is offensive to Him. Yet his reproof is for those ears who need it, not for others to lower in their eyes such as may be censured.

It is well to observe that there is no depreciation of Christian teaching or teachers in comparison with gospel work, such as the common version naturally insinuates. It is an appeal to the love which ought to bind specially the converted souls to him who was the means of bringing them to God; and not in any way a formal comparison of the relative value of this gift with that. Hence there is the avoidance of the word , or teacher, and the use of the somewhat slighting term, , as applied to those at Corinth who had done too much to occupy and turn away the saints there. Some of these might affect the law, others philosophy; but all sought to keep the brethren who listened to them in their leading-strings. They had little enjoyment of, or confidence in, the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and hence sought to direct the thoughts and ways of their admirers, as do guardians, or , with the young entrusted to their charge. But this savors more of Jewish or Gentile modes, than of the gospel or its liberty; and the apostle could not but remind them that he it was who begot them through the gospel. Only one could feel for them as a parent himself; yet was it against him especially that these leaders of cliques had sought to alienate his “beloved children.” It is the interest of such a guardian to retain his charge in subjection as long as possible; while a father's joy is to see his children grow up intelligent as well as affectionate, maintaining the family character. Hence he adds, “I beseech you then, become imitators of me,” a word which he urges again at the beginning of chapter 11, with the beautiful proviso, “even as I also [am] of Christ.” Disinterested love is bold, and can speak freely. Certainly he sought not theirs, but them, and the cross in practice, not earthly case, or honor, or gain. Had they not lost their sense of what becomes the Christian? Let them follow him in self-renunciation for Christ.

“For this cause I sent to you Timotheus, who is my beloved and faithful child in [the] Lord, who will remind you of my ways that are in Christ [Jesus] 1even as everywhere in every assembly I teach.” (Ver. 17.) This young servant of the Lord was one who could speak the more intimately of the apostle's ways in Christ; inasmuch as, on the one hand, he himself was his beloved and faithful child (which the apostle could not say of the Corinthians); on the other, the apostle never accommodated his doctrine to the assemblies, so as to falsify the testimony of the Lord. Whatever might be the elasticity of grace which dealt with individuals, seeking their blessing in Christ, he taught in every assembly just as he wrote to Corinth. The ways that are in Christ do not waver; they are straight, if painful to the flesh. Yet this was the man whom the perverse eyes of detractors charged with inconsistency and untrustworthiness! It is utterly false that a differing doctrine in discipline prevailed in the different assemblies. The apostle taught the same everywhere, and his writings insist on it where he did not go personally. It is the assembly of God, and His mind varies not. He had demanded nothing of the assembly in Corinth that he had not laid down elsewhere.

But some had drawn from the apostle's not going to Corinth, and sending Timothy, that he shrank from visiting the assembly there. So had the false apostles insinuated in their own pride to his depreciation. “Now some were puffed up as though I were not coming unto you; but I shall come shortly unto you, if the Lord will, and will know not the word of those that are puffed up but the power; for the kingdom of God [is] not in word but in power. What will ye? that I come unto you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of meekness?” (Ver. 18-21.) Indeed he was

coming, and for this dependent on the Lord's will. But subjection to the Lord in no way enfeebles the conduct of His servants. So on coming the apostle tells them he will know, not pretentious talk, but reality— “the power.” For this in truth is the essential characteristic of “the kingdom of God,” in contradistinction from “the word,” to which Greek ears had been ever used, and alas the Jews, for the most part. And this2 leads the apostle to remind the Corinthian saints that, if he had reminded them of the peculiar bond between them and him, as their father through the gospel, he had power and authority from God, however slow he might be to enforce it. It was for them indeed, as he puts it, to decide how In was to come, for this was the real question, not whether, nor when, belt how: with a rod, or with love and a spirit of meekness? What he desired himself, as he says elsewhere, was their edification, not their destruction. In Acts 5 we see Peter using the rod; and the apostle Paul could do as much according to the Lord. But his heart sought other things for his beloved children: what did they wish?

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 4:6-13, Notes on

The apostle had thus established both the dependence of the servant on the Lord, and his independence of human scrutiny. Not, of course, that the church is denied its responsibility to judge conduct. Here it is a question of the counsels of the heart, which no man can scan duly, but the Lord will at His coming. “And then,” he adds solemnly, “shall the praise be to each from God.” He could thus speak freely and happily himself. It ought to have searched the conscience of many a Corinthian.

“And these things, brethren, I transferred to myself and Apollos on your account, that ye may in our case learn nothing above what is written,1 in order that ye be not puffed up one for one against another. For who distinguisheth thee? and what hast thou which thou didst not receive? But if thou didst even receive, why boastest thou as not having received? Already ye are filled; already ye have been enriched, apart from us ye reigned; and I would that ye did reign, that we also might reign with you” (ver. 6-8). The apostle explains here what he has also done elsewhere—his applying a principle to himself; and, in this case, to Apollos also, which he meant for others, in order that the saints might be profited. The misleaders at Corinth were really in his view, as the apostle here implies but he lays down a standard, by which he does not hesitate to measure himself and Apollos, which the saints could easily use for others whose pretensions were as high and unfounded as the services of Paul and Apollos were real and of God. Of Him some had lost sight entirely; and each, choosing his leader, was puffed up with party feeling, What is written makes God everything, man at best an instrument, as he is alone rightly a servant. God only makes the difference between one and another, and this especially in divine things. And as it is He who makes a difference, what has anyone that he has not received? and if received, why boast as if it were not so? The folly of Corinthian vanity was evident in being puffed up for those they exalted as their respective chiefs.

But he proceeds to deal a further blow, and this of the keenest irony, as Isaiah scrupled not to do in exposing the folly of idol-worship. Trashy, if not corrupting, doctrine always lowers practice; and the Corinthians had insensibly relinquished or lost the place of sufferers with Christ. This the apostle notices witheringly. When Christ reigns, we shall indeed be at ease, and in the fullest satisfaction; and He will drink the wine new with us in the kingdom of His Father—yea, He will gird Himself, and make us recline at table, and come and serve us as He in His grace deigned to assure us, when He will also set the faithful servant over all that He has. But now is the time to deny self, to take up one's cross, and follow Him, who suffered many, all, things here below. But all was confusion for the Corinthians; their eye was not single, and their body therefore anything but full of light. “Already [that is, before the time] ye are filled, already ye have become rich, apart from us ye reigned, and I would that ye did reign.” For they were deceiving themselves: the time was not yet come. False doctrine had made them false practically to the present object of God. Satan had succeeded in severing them, in walk at least and aims, from the Lord, who nevertheless waits for the time of glory, when He and they shall really reign together. The apostle proceeds to draw out the contrast seen in those to whom, if God had set them “first in the church,” He had given grace to become the greatest and most patient sufferers in the world.

“For, I think,2 God set us the apostles last as devoted to death, because we became a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men, we, fools for Christ, but ye wise in Christ; we weak, but ye strong; ye illustrious, but we disgraced. Until the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and buffeted and homeless wanderers, and we toil, working with our own hands; reviled, we bless; persecuted, we suffer; slandered,3 we beseech. We became as the world's scum, offscouring of all, until now (ver. 9-18). It is evident that those who misled the Corinthians, as well as the saints misled by them, had made the church their world, and that fleshly principles had supplanted the grace of Christ for their souls. They had schools and spectacles of their own, as well as the Greeks outside. In a burst of the finest feeling, not without sarcasm but with real love, which could use it for good, the apostle sets out the true path of Christ as one of suffering but, victory over the world. Faith working by love can alone secure such victory. This was apostolic ambition, if ambition there can be of a saintly kind; and this God had given the apostles in appointing them last, nearest to Christ, who had gone down into depths of suffering where none could follow. But there were sufferings of Christ which grace does share with the Christian, and these the apostles knew best, and of the apostles, we may perhaps add, none so much as Paul. Well could he then say, “God set us, the apostles, last, as devoted to death, a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men.” Did the Corinthians wish and claim to be prudent in Christ? The apostles at least were content to be fools for His sake. Were the Corinthians strong and glorious in their own desire and estimate? The apostles gloried in weakness and disgrace; even as Peter and John, on a well-known occasion, went their way rejoicing from before the Sanhedrin, because they had been counted worthy to be dishonored in behalf of the name. Nor was it only the fervor of early zeal. “To the present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked and buffeted and homeless wanderers, and labor working with our own hands.” Had not the Corinthians, or their misleaders, counted all this low and eccentric, ascetic and enthusiastic, in Paul? “Railed on, we bless; persecuted, we endure; slandered, we beseech: we became as the world's scum, offscouring of all, until now:” an utter impossibility, of course, not in this or that particular which superstition can readily imitate, but as a whole, save through the constraining and assimilating love of Christ, who cheers those who set out and go on in such a path as this with the bright comfort of reigning along with Him. For I reckon, as the apostle says in Rom. 8, that the sufferings of this present time are of no account in comparison of the glory that is to be revealed in regard to us. If there is a more energetic sketch of the suffering here, it is because apostles are in view rather than the saints at large; but the principle is the same, and the Corinthians had slipped out of it to present ease and dignity, which they thought due to the truth of Christianity—an error which soon culminated, as it still does, in Christendom. Where are those that can expose it, not only in word but in deed and in truth?

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 4:1-5, Notes on

The apostle had now shown the solemn responsibility of the workman, and the impropriety of all boast in men, seeing that all things were theirs as truly as they were Christ's and Christ God's. It was needful however to draw out still more fully the relations of ministers, and this lie does in the beginning of our chapter. “So let a man account of us, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's1 mysteries.” (Ver. 1.) The apostle is careful so to characterize himself as well as Apollos. They were Christ's official servants, not merely he and Cephas who were apostles, but he and Apollos, the latter of whom certainly had no such apostolic place.

Indeed nothing could be simpler than the manner in which this Alexandrian brother was led on in the work of the Lord, having begun it when possessed of the least possible light (the baptism of John) and afterward indebted to no more formal instructors than the godly Priscilla and Aquila. But being an eloquent man and mighty in the scriptures, he contributed much to those who believed through grace, particularly in the controversies which sprang up with the Jews. From Ephesus he went to Corinth soon afterward. We can thus understand how readily so distinguished a person fell in with the taste of not a few Christians in that city, whose party-spirit raised him up (with not the least allowance of it on his part) against Paul or Peter. On the other hand the apostle in the holy liberty of grace would in no way lower Apollos—rather the contrary, classing him with himself, and this not merely as bondmen () but as servants of Christ. They were therefore responsible to Him only. Thus they were also (official servants) and stewards of God's mysteries. This was their duty to the household of God—to furnish meat in due season, specially that truth which is most distinctively characteristic of the New Testament.

It is scarcely needful to prove here that “mysteries” never mean the sacraments or standing institutions of Christianity. God's mysteries mean those secret things which are now revealed in contrast with what Israel had of old (Deut. 29:29), not, as is vulgarly supposed, things unintelligible, but truths reserved by God in Old Testament times, now displayed in Christ on high and made known by the Spirit in the New Testament.

“Here2 moreover it is sought in stewards that one be found faithful, but to me it amounts to very little that I be inquired into by you or by man's day. Nay, I do not inquire even into myself, for I am conscious to myself of nothing, yet I am not justified by this, but he that inquireth into me is the Lord. So then judge nothing prematurely until the Lord shall have come, who shall both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and shall make manifest the counsels of the hearts, and then shall each have his praise from God.” (Ver. 2-5.)

Thus the apostle reasons from the figure of a steward where fidelity was especially required. The critical reading is instead of the common , and there can be little doubt that the former, not the latter, is correct. Here (meaning on earth), he adds, it is required in the case of stewards, that one should be found faithful. Undoubtedly it is of still more consequence in the steward of heavenly things; but the apostle is careful to place the personal responsibility of the steward in direct relation to Christ; “but to me it is a very little thing [or, “amounteth to very little"] that I should be,” not exactly, “judged” “by you.” The word properly signifies the preliminary inquiry before the trial. Not that this was said in contempt of the Corinthian saints; man's day, or inquisition, was held equally cheap by him, whoever might essay to undertake a task which the Lord had never delegated to man. Not only is none competent, but the Spirit gives no sufficiency for this thing. It is reserved for the Lord whom alone it suits, even if the creature could conceivably be made fit for it. Here again it was no slight of others, nor self-complacency, for he particularly disclaims any pretension either to irresponsibility or to be his own judge.

Man is wholly incompetent for such an inquiry, were he even an apostle: yea, it would be, an usurpation of the functions of the Lord. It is of the highest importance that this immediate sense of responsibility to Him be maintained always and everywhere. Whether it be a question of Paul or of Apollos, it is the same principle. Nor does it apply only to those whom God set first in the church, or in Christ's service, but to the last or least no loss than to the first. To the Lord alone it belongs to inquire into their service.

Again, it is of the utmost importance to see that the church has no such authority or duty. Christ's servants according to their gift in His sovereign disposal may serve the church, or they may be debtors to all men in the gospel, but in their service, in all its details as well as in principle, they are accountable alone to Christ. For He, and not the church, gave them the gift, the possession and exercise of which constitutes them His servants. As they are called to love and honor the assembly, is) the assembly is bound to respect their direct allegiance to Christ the Lord, not to interpose itself between Him and them.

The servants no doubt are saints, and as such their conduct, if apparently so wrong, comes under discipline, and, if really evil, under holy censure. No person or office enjoys or ought to enjoy immunity. Nay, the doctrine of teachers if false, would expose them to the assembly's judgment, and more severely than in the case of others, because of their position, perhaps even to putting away. A clearly improper use of their gift for selfish purposes might bring them under similar dealing, were the doctrine ever so sound. Still in their service as each, apart from such evil, Christ's ministers are directly and exclusively accountable to Himself. They have not a lady over them in the church, but are subject only to the Lord. The abandonment of this truth, the assertion of the assembly's instead of Christ's authority over ministry, brought in catholicism and finally popery, though other and still more deadly ingredients might mingle with both and the last especially. But the substitution of the church for Christ in regulating ministry, as well as claiming to be its source, is assuredly an evil of the gravest nature; and Protestantism has by no means succeeded in exorcising completely this evil spirit. Do we not see it active in Presbyterianism, flourishing in Wesleyanism, gross and unblushing in Congregationalism? Truly we may say this kind goeth not forth but by prayer and fasting; for as the energy and self-importance not of ecclesiastics but of men dearly loves it, it is only faith that can walk in constant dependence on the Lord, so as to dispense with it and make it an intrusion and offense.

It is of deep interest also to observe the apostle's choice of expression. Even in speaking of the Lord he does not say , but . The truth is that the believer never comes into judgment (), as our Lord Himself laid down in John 5; if he did, he must be lost. Life and judgment are incompatible. He that refuses Christ and life in Him, will assuredly be judged. He is lost, and it will be manifest then.

Thus is the honor of Christ vindicated by God on such as have spurned His Son. Those who believe in Him are called to no such compulsory and ruinous homage; they gladly bow even now to Him their Lord and life. They will give account to God; they will receive according to the things done in the body, as they will be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ; but they will never come into judgment, having already faith and eternal life in Him. They exercise themselves, therefore, to have a good conscience now.

So the apostle says here (not speaking of his past life, though even there he had walked conscientiously, however blinded and so sinning with a high hand), “I am conscious to myself of nothing,” yet, he adds, “I am not justified by this.” A good conscience is a good thing; but it does not clear the person who may in this or that be blinded by self-love or other feelings. The Lord will decide at His coming; it is He who makes the only adequate inquiry. “Wherefore judge nothing prematurely [which the Corinthians were presuming to do], until the Lord shall have come, who will [not judge us but] both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall each have his praise from God.” At that epoch all that sought the dark to avoid detection will be exposed in the light of God, which will even manifest the counsels which the hearts themselves failed to see through. How fallacious often is the praise of men now where shams and shadows reign for most! Then shall each have the praise that is due and enduring and precious from God. Of this alone the apostle speaks here. He had already spoken of perdition, and of salvation where the work of the careless workman is burnt up.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 3:16-23, Notes on

The figure of a building with its foundation, already used, furnishes the apostle with a yet fuller illustration. We have seen workmen wise or negligent, materials costly and durable or perishable and worthless, with a reward as the result on the one hand, or the workman suffering the loss of his work and his person only saved with difficulty. Now he develops on both sides, and contrasts the holiness of God's temple in the saints with the enemy's instruments in corrupting and destroying.

“Know ye not that ye are God's temple, and [that] the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any one destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which ye are. Let none deceive himself: if any one thinketh himself to be wise among you in this age, let him become foolish that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, He that taketh the wise in their craftiness; and again, [The] Lord knoweth the reasonings of the wise that they are vain. Wherefore let none boast in men, for all things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye Christ's, and Christ God's.” (Ver. 16-28.)

Thus God has His temple on earth now as surely as of old in Israel. But this is often not seen by those who confess that the old Levitical order is judged and gone, and that the effort to imitate it since redemption is to fall away from the grace and truth of God now come in Christ, and proclaimed in the gospel, and to be displayed in the Christian and the church. It was the presence of God always which constituted God's temple. Not the costliness of stones, nor the splendor of gold or silver, but the cloud wherein Jehovah was pleased to come down was its true glory, when Israel could boast of a habitation in their midst for the mighty One of Jacob. So now it is not merely that there are Christians, but God has His house or temple. It is the assembly, not the individuals considered as such, but those builded together for the purpose in virtue of the Spirit. See Eph. 2:22. The Spirit dwells in each believer doubtless; but this is another truth and equally certain from God's word. “Know ye not that ye are God's temple, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” How solemn the fact that a divine person, the Holy Ghost, dwells where Christians are; and this, it may be added, because of redemption! For it was never so till the work of Christ was wrought, and He going on high sent the Holy Spirit down to be in the saints and abide with them forever. It is God's testimony to the efficacy of His sacrifice. Whatever the mercies and blessings and privileges before, this could not be till the blood that makes atonement forever was shed. Now the Spirit of God comes where that blood-shedding is confessed; and there He dwells, making those who confess it God's temple.

But it is much to be weighed that the apostle is here sheaving the danger not only of unreality but of defilement. There are those who build wisely and well; there are those who admit what is trashy, who build on the one and only foundation unfit materials. But there is worse still. There is the enemy at work using men that bear the Lord's name to corrupt or destroy: the same word, and one may say, the same thing. For God speaks of evil doctrine according to its own nature if it work unimpeded; and this is the only result of heterodoxy so left. He who teaches it corrupts and destroys; and him who destroys (or corrupts) the temple of God shall God destroy. Awful end! but is there not a cause? is it not sufficient? Could the holy God feel or do otherwise? It is in vain to plead love; for in truth the blow of love in caring for the objects beloved is beyond all to be feared. And how does not God resent that evil Which defiles the holy temple where His Spirit dwells in virtue and honor of the work of Christ on the cross? He will surely destroy those whom Satan thus employs, under whatever disguise, to pollute the very streams of life and blessing for souls, yea, to dishonor the temple wherein He dwells.

It is to deceive oneself where any reason is allowed in palliation of evil. Men who so weaken—I will not say Christian feeling only, but—common conscience may be found among those who bear the Lord's name; but, specious as they may seem and fine-spoken, it is not the wisdom of God in Christ, but of this age that comes to naught. How incomparably better and safer to become foolish that one may be wise! Such was the path the apostle took, obedient to the heavenly vision. Did he not seem foolish in the eyes of all with whom he broke? Was he not wise, whatever a Festus might say? What and where is Festus now? and Agrippa and Bernice? and the high priest and the accusing chiefs of the Jews? They thought themselves wise; and so did others who in the Corinthian assembly brought in the wisdom of the schools to evade the cross and stand well with the men of the time.

But everywhere, without yet more than within,” the wisdom of the world is foolishness with God;” and nowhere is its character so exposed, nowhere its indulgence so perilous, as in the temple of God—the church. So it is written in Job 4:13, and Psa. 94:11. Whether one look back on past experience or forward to the kingdom, it makes no difference: least of all can human craft or sage reasonings suit God's temple, or those who traffic in them there escape His judgment. And why should those boast who have with Christ all things? For so indeed it is in the grace of God. “All things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye Christ's, and Christ God's.” We have all and abound, not only all those whom flesh would set up as rivals, but all circumstances present and future, ours now through the grace of Christ, and ourselves His as He is God's, forever and to His glory. How blessed and infinite the associations which flesh overlooks and the world in its self-sufficient nothingness treats as nothing!

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 3:5-15, Notes on

Glorying in men, be they ever so blessed, is carnal, no less than self-assertion; they are indeed off-shoots of the same tree. How could those who are thus erected into heads of schools tolerate so false a position for themselves or their followers if indeed they have the eye single to Christ: if not, can they be trusted? Far different is our apostle who asks, “What1 then is Apollos? and what2 is Paul? 3Ministers by whom ye believed, and as the Lord gave to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So that neither he that planteth is anything nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. And he that planteth and he that watereth are one thing; but each shall receive his own reward according, to his own labor.” (Ver. 5-8.)

Thus does God's wisdom correct the workings of unjudged nature, and this by a simple statement of the truth. For what are any? Servants at best in the proclamation of the gospel and the truth in general—servants by whom the Corinthian saints believed. Was there then no difference between Paul and Apollos? As the Lord gave to each. What room for boasting of men? Why not of the Lord who gave to each? Of this they had thought little. Grace unites. Flesh divides and scatters—flesh pre-occupied with this man or that, sometimes as here unable to find anything save in its favorites, sometimes heaping to itself teachers as at a later day. In either way there they be ever learning, but really no coming to the knowledge of the truth. The fact is that the Lord gives variously, nothing that is not good for the use of edifying, nothing in vain. It is not His way to form a class of laborers all alike, but to work differently by each. “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.” As it is in the work of the field where labor is expended in one form or another, but God alone can cause to grow, so it is in spiritual things. “So that neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.” How insignificant is any instrument God it is who works efficiently. “And he that planteth and he that watereth is one thing.” Here he sets ministry, or ministers, together as “one thing.” The consequence is that God alone is seen to be of moment. But this very consideration, that they are “one thing,” rebukes the party work of their flatterers; as his own reward for his own work to be received by-and-by is a serious suggestion for ministers who like or allow the unwise zeal of those who cry them up and depreciate others. Their differences vanish into nothingness before God who graciously deigns to use each for blessing; even as “each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor:” not according to his personal qualities, however cried up by his partisans, nor even according to the particular gift bestowed of the Lord, nor yet according to present results before the eyes of men often deceived and in no case able to discern as He does and will manifest by-and-by, but “according to his own labor.”

How cheering to the despised but faithful and self-denying and gracious laborers. How humbling to Corinthian vanity which never took into account the one principle the Spirit here gives for the divine and enduring recompense! “For we are God's fellow-workmen; ye are God's husbandry, God's building.” (Ver. 9.) This is the transition which justifies the foregoing, and prepares for the expansion of the last figure into the applications that follow. Whoever the servants may be, they are God's in direct responsibility, not in this sense the church's, still less of a party. Not that for this reason they do not serve the saints, for the more they preach not themselves but Jesus Christ, the more are they bondmen of the saints for His sake. But they are God's fellow-laborers, given of Him, doing His work, responsible in everything to Him, and finally to give Him an account. The phrase in no way means “workers together with God.” This is not the gist of the argument in the context; it is a thought and language foreign to scripture; and also, in my judgment, unbecoming and presumptuous. The emphasis rests on “God's.” They were “God's fellow-workmen, workers together,” not rivals as flesh in others or themselves might make them, but companions in work under God who employed them as such.

Nor is this all. The saints are God's husbandry, God's building, as emphatically. Were they producing what was suitable for Him who had the field tilled Was the building as God's should be? I am surprised that any should think the meaning to be “with a view to your being God's husbandry and God's building;” for the apostle in saying “ye are” goes much farther. And duty is ever grounded on and shaped and measured by relationship.

We now come to language and application still more precise and solemn. “According to the grace of God that was given to me as a wise architect I laid the foundation and another buildeth on [it]. But let each see how be buildeth on [it]. For other foundation can none lay than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any one build on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, straw, the work of each shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare [it], because it is revealed in fire, and the fire shall try the work of each of what sort it is. If the work of any shall abide which he hath built on [it], he shall receive reward; if the work of any one shall be burnt up, be shall suffer loss, but himself shall be saved but so as through fire.” Ver. 10-15.)

Even the apostle loved to connect his work and office with the grace of God rather than with abstract authority. It is this feeling which has so evaporated from Christendom, so that ministry has humanized and assumed even a worldly character, to the unspeakable loss of the church and the most serious dishonor to the Lord. Here he is careful to speak plainly; “according to the grace of God that was given mess a wise master-builder [or architect] I have laid a foundation, and another buildeth upon [it], but let each see how he buildeth on [it].” Here we have the responsibility of him who ministers. Apostolic place is maintained, but responsible service is affirmed, and it is a serious thing. “For other foundation can none lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any one buildeth upon the foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, grass, straw, the work of each shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed by fire; and the work of each, of what sort it is, the fire itself shall prove.”

Here all is in due proportion, and the revelation of God in Christ is laid as the foundation of all; but we see how man's responsibility remains. On that foundation very different material might be built up—not only what is precious, like the great and costly stones, &c., of the temple, but also what is worthless and vile. And here man's judgment is at fault; for doubtless many a Corinthian saint had prized the hay and straw of man's wisdom, and slighted the gold and silver of apostolic truth. Hence the need of another day and of the Lord's discernment. Therefore are they told that much may only be disclosed in the day that is coming. None but this day is to be revealed in fire. Then will the consuming judgment of God deal with each one's work. Even now there may be manifestations; but they are necessarily partial. The fire itself of that day will prove of what sort is the work of each. It is good to weigh this now. All that lets in the light of God's future on present occupation is wholesome not only for His servant, but for all concerned. There will be no mistake then: all must be in the light of God. “If any one's work which he hath built up shall abide, he shall receive reward.” For reward there is to cheer in the midst of present sorrow in the hope of the Lord's recompense in that day. Present reward is a danger for every soul, especially in divine things. There is however comfort of love, and the more real the more we rest upon Christ rather than on Christians. He then takes care that we shall have it in good measure, even if the sphere seem small. And so it must be in a day of general departure from faith. It is His love which constrains the servant, and confidence in His grace which acts as a constant spring of action.

When so laboring, the hope of future reward from the Lord acts both safely and powerfully: otherwise there is danger. But it is dangerous also to despise the future as those naturally do who are too much occupied with present results. Will their work stand? “If the work of any one shall be burnt up, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire.” It is a powerful figure, and not hard to understand where the truth in general is held firm.

It is well known that Rome has founded on this passage one of its chief proofs of purgatory; but this is itself a sample of the refuse against which the apostle warns. For it is evident that not the faithful in general or their ways are in question, but, ministers and their doctrine; and again that a day of sifting judgment is meant and not some intermediate state now after death. Fire is the figurative expression of His judicial action which consumes all dross, not punishment for the separate spirit or soul, nor even a process of purifying it. “Saved, yet so as through fire,” is to mark the difficulty of it; yet will God take care that so it shall be. So, as has been said, a builder might see his building ruined by fire, yet himself escape. Besides each one's work is to be thus tested—the apostle's work as certainly as that of his detractors, and gold, silver, and precious stones are subjected to the fire no less than the consumable material. Does all this apply to Romanist ideas of purgatory? The real point is the danger of introducing rubbish even where the true foundation is owned, not fundamental error or Anti-Christianism, but airy notions, lax maxims as to practice, &c., which the day of trial would detect and destroy. It was not so with his work whom some at Corinth had despised.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 3:1-4, Notes on

Such then is the ample complete and perfect provision of God for the blessing of His children by the truth to His own glory. His spirit is everywhere the agent and power, as Christ is the object presented, and His work the efficacious ground and means, which His own sovereign counsels are the spring of all. Expressly is it the Holy Ghost who, as He reveals, and communicates in suited words, so enables the believer to receive, the things of God. And this led to a contrast between him that is spiritual, who discerns all things, and the natural man who does not receive and cannot know the things of the Spirit.

It is not however that the Corinthian saints were “natural” men, for this would imply that they were not born of God. This the apostle does not say or mean, but that they were “carnal,” or “fleshly:” that is, flesh had still attractions for them. It was not judged, detected in principle, or hated in all forms and degrees. They still valued what was of man, wisdom, ability, or eloquence, as such. They had no adequate sense of nature's worthlessness in divine things. “Carnal,” or “fleshly” describes not those dead in their sins, but those who, though quickened of the Spirit, are either not yet set free (as in Rom. 7) or still swayed by the influence of men, and nature unjudged—I do not say in its immorality, but in its estimate of itself. This last is before the apostle's mind here. The Corinthians might be babes in Christ, but they were not spiritual.

“And I, brethren, was not able to speak to you as spiritual, but as fleshly,1 as babes in Christ. With milk I gave you drink, not meat; for ye were not yet able, nor indeed are ye now able, for ye are yet carnal. For whereas emulation and strife2 [are] among you, are ye not carnal and walk according to man? For when one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I of Apollos, are ye not men?"3(Ver. 1-4.)

Thus the reason now given by the apostle for having urged on the Corinthians the elementary truths of Christ is their own state. They were not spiritual but fleshly. What a blow to their self-complacency! If they were, but babes in Christ, what else would be suited food? That hankering after, or admiration of, the world's wisdom was its sure evidence: for flesh delights in what is of man, as the Spirit gives to enjoy what is of God.

It is quite an error however to suppose that all Christians are “spiritual” in the sense in which that term is used in chapter 2 which differs not at all from its use in chapter 3. In both it means those not merely quickened but walking, feeling, judging in the Spirit. To say in chapter ii. that one discerns all things but is oneself discerned by none conveys quite as much as the contrast with fleshliness in chapter 3. The mistake is in supposing that the apostle looks only at but two classes, whereas in truth he speaks of three: the natural man, the carnal, and the spiritual, the last two being Christians, but the state different. For “babes in Christ” does not refer to the recency of their conversion, but to their lack of growth. As the Hebrews were kept back by their religious prejudices (Heb. 5), so were these Greeks by their philosophizing. In either way souls may be arrested, or misled, and stunted in growth. In one of the cases indeed it was from no went of time; for on this score they ought to have been teachers when they had need to be taught the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God, as the apostle put it to their great humiliation. So here: he gave them milk to drink. Meat was of no use in their actual state, nay, it might help on the mischief.

But there are other mistakes to guard against. Some in opposing the absurdity of reserve, Arcani Discipline, &c., have labored to prove that the same doctrine is in one aspect milk, in another meat. It is true that the Christ in whom the babes rested is more and more enjoyed of the fathers, but it remains certain that there is a whole range of truth as to Him which a carnal or even immature state in the believer would render unseasonable. The mystery of Christ and the church in Ephesians and Colossians is more than the priesthood of Christ in Hebrews. It was not that the apostle could not have communicated the depths of God; but could they then profit by such teaching? Would it be of God to give meat beyond them, or injurious to them? “Ye were not yet able, nor indeed are ye yet able.” Nor was it from lack of natural ability, but on the contrary because they valued and trusted it to the hindrance of the Holy Spirit: “for ye are yet carnal.” And this he proves from their state by incontestable evidence. “For whereas emulation and strife [are] among you, are ye not carnal and walk according to man? For when one saith, I am of Paul, and another, I of Apollos, are ye not men?” Emulation and strife were works of the flesh, not fruits of the Spirit. Their existence in their midst showed how little they walked in self judgment. It was the party work they were used to in the schools of men. Certainly party zeal for Paul or Apollos was no better than for Plato or Aristotle; it had all the same root. Nor is there any difficulty in conciliating such a reproof of not a few of the Corinthian saints with his thanksgiving for the church in the introduction of the epistle? For as already seen, this was for the privileges bestowed on them by the goodness of God, not for their actual state. Whatever their gifts, they were in fact grievously lacking in practical grace, and this, as it exposes to fresh or revived forms in which human nature works, so it would effectually binder growth through the truth. The Holy Spirit in such circumstances most take of their things to show them their faults, not of Christ's things to glorify Him and comfort their hearts.

It is important, moreover, to see that it is a question not of morality according to the law, but of what suits, pleases, and magnifies Christ—the very object of the presence and action of the Spirit here below. Hence the apostle reproves them for walking, not as bad men merely, but “according to man.” They ranged themselves under their new favorites in forgetfulness of Christ, and in abuse of their own mercies through

His servants. “Are ye not men?” says he, indignantly protesting against such a state of things. They were saints and ought to walk as such.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Notes on

The apostle now touches on that which had been made a matter of reproach against his preaching at Corinth. He had not sought to avoid the scandal of the cross here any more than elsewhere. On the contrary it was this precisely to which he had given undisguised prominence in that city of intellectual culture and of moral corruption. Even here however there was a guard against narrow one-sidedness, as well as care to bring forward Christ personally, not a point of doctrine only, were it even that deepest and most justly absorbing point of the cross. It was Jesus Christ he preached, and Him crucified. He eschewed the pompous phrases and the subtle speculations which Corinth then affected.

Thus the brethren there might see the consistency, first and last, of that which unbelief stumbled at in Paul, and which the flesh in saints would rather shroud in silence. Is the cross God's power to those that are saved? Is Christ crucified foolishness to the Gentile and an offense to the Jew? Does wisdom of word make the cross vain? The apostle was led of God to present the truth in a way not palatable but truly wholesome and withal most for God's glory when he went to Corinth. It was not Jesus and the resurrection as at Athens, nor was it His return to reign as at Thessalonica, though no doubt none of these elements was wanting; but at Corinth the Spirit directed to that which was in due season. And as he says to the law-affecting Galatians,” God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world;” so here he could look back with satisfaction on the preeminence given to Jesus Christ and Him crucified in his first visit to Corinth; and this too with decision and conviction on his own part. It is not merely that so it was, but he judged it best. Nor does it mean, as some have thought, that with all the abasement of the cross, he nevertheless preached Christ. No such uncertain sound came from the apostle as from his commentators. It was not Christ, crucified though He was, but emphatically Christ and Him crucified. Well he knew and deeply felt that there is nothing like that cross which stands alone apart from all before and after: yea, nothing in time, nothing in eternity, similar or second to it. For there sin in man rose up to slay the Son of God, yet was in slaying Him itself slain as well as judged, that grace might reign through righteousness unto eternal life for every believer.

“And I, when I came unto you, brethren, came not in excellency of word or wisdom announcing to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I in weakness and in fear and in much trembling was with you; and my word and my preaching, not in persuasive words of1 wisdom but in demonstration of [the] Spirit and of power; that your faith might not be in man's wisdom but in God's power.” (Ver. 1-5.)

There can be no doubt in my judgment that the various reading in the first verse though given in the Sinaitic (first hand), Alexandrian and Palimpsest of Paris (C), with some good cursives and very ancient versions (Pesch. and Cop.), &c., is not correct, but the common text. It is not only erroneous but an error which destroys the beauty and indeed the sense of the passage. For the apostle is contrasting his use of revealed truth in dealing with such souls as those in Corinth when he first carried them the gospel, and that which he would do with those who simply and thoroughly submitted to Christ. The mystery in all its hidden depths and all its heavenly glory he sets before those he calls “the perfect,” that is, the full-grown who were established in Christianity; but not so with babes unformed in the truth of the gospel. Hence the force of the introductory words. The apostle came not in excellency of word or wisdom when announcing at Corinth the testimony of God, who was calling them as all men to repent, and to this end testifying of Jesus Christ and Him crucified. To this Paul judged it right to confine himself at the beginning of the gospel in that voluptuous city. Maturer souls need Christ every way, risen, at God's right hand, and coming again in glory. Here he presented His person, and especially Him crucified. It is not a philosophy but a person and a work. “The perfect” need much more, and have no stint; and there it is that God's hidden wisdom in the mystery hidden from ages and generations becomes so important: not that there is reserve on God's part, but that the state of souls is such that some want milk as being babes, others solid food as being settled in Christ; and they are welcomed into all the truth of God, as indeed they need it all.

But further there was in the apostle's tone and way a suitability to the message he brought. He repudiated all artificial method whether in thought or in the language which clothed it, that the truth of God should address itself directly to man's heart. So also he was with the Corinthians in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. This is not the ideal that men in their imagination frame of the great apostle! But such a deep sense of weakness was by grace his strength, as the Corinthians' straining after power was their weakness. His one desire was to exalt God, owning the nothingness as well as the guilt of man; with an anxious dread lest any word on his part should obscure the true glory, that it might be God's testimony to and in Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. Hence his word and his preaching (the thing preached, not merely his manner in it) was not after the rhetoric of the schools, but such as gave scope to God's Spirit.

Did the saints then loathe the bread of heaven? Did they pine after the leeks and onions and flesh-pots of Egypt? The apostle was not the one to gratify their natural tastes. He at least was true to Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He sought not to win by the display of his own extraordinary ability; nor would he exhibit the wonders of the divine word which he could easily have presented so as to dazzle the Corinthian mind; nor did he condescend to set out these precious truths in a diction attractive to refined ears. The matter and the manner he judged most for God's glory was that which poured contempt on man and looked only to the Spirit's demonstration and power, that their faith might not be in man's wisdom but in God's power. For just so far as preachers fill men with admiration for their peculiar style of thought or language, is it evident that they are weak in the Spirit, and attract to themselves instead of clearing and establishing souls in the truth whereby the Spirit works in power. Another indication of unwholesome teaching (too abundant at Corinth) is that which produces a distaste for all but the favorite or his line. It is not that the heart does not bless God for the instrument; but the effect of such a course as Paul's is to maintain the Lord's glory and His truth unimpaired, to avoid the natural tendency to a school or clique with its leader, and to keep the saints in full liberty and holy confidence before God by faith. May our decision be like his whose words (and they are God's) have occupied us here!

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 2:11-16, Notes on

It is the Holy Spirit then by whom God has revealed to us what of old was hidden; and He is thoroughly able to do, so, seeing that He searches the very depths of God, as indeed He is God. This the apostle illustrates by an analogy drawn from human nature. “For who of men1 knoweth

the things of a man save the spirit of the man that [is] in him? So also the things of God knoweth2 no one save the Spirit of God. But we did not receive the spirit of the world but the Spirit that [is] from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God." (Vers. 11, 12.)

No man knows what is in another's mind; He may conjecture more or less accurately, but none of men can know inwardly what is in another's mind and has not been communicated to him. The spirit of the man himself knows, and no one else. It is shut out not only from animals inferior to man in the scale of creation, but from his fellows. So, but with incomparably greater force, no one has come to know the things of God, unless they be revealed: only the Spirit of God knows them. But here is the inestimable privilege of the Christian. It was not the spirit of the world we received, but the Spirit that is from God, and this expressly that we might know, inwardly know, the things freely given to us by God.

We are in the conscious relationship of children, and have not merely an acquired objective knowledge, but realize what God has vouchsafed in our own minds. Were any courting the spirit of the world? what a descent for a Christian! What a forgetfulness of our new and divine and eternal associations through our Lord Jesus! Here then it is a question of knowing through the Holy Ghost the things freely given us by God, and to this end is the Spirit given to the believer now that Christ was come and had wrought redemption. Where the blood has been put, the oil can follow, that unction from the Holy One whereby the very babe in Christ knows all things. For the grace that has freely given him all with God's own Son would put him in the conscious knowledge of all and in the joy of communion; and this can only be by the Holy Spirit of God, who accordingly anoints us when established in Christ, that is, when firmly attached to Him.

But the apostle tells us of more than this supernatural Spirit-given knowledge. In order that they may be enjoyed, the things of God had to be communicated divinely; and here the chosen instruments had to be made, not infallible of course, which is the quality of God alone, but perfectly guided in giving out the truth and guarded from all error for their task. This is inspiration, its permanent fruit being the scriptures we possess in the goodness of God. The principle is stated in verse 13, "which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in [those] taught by [the] Spirit,3 communicating spiritual things by spiritual4 [words]."

It is well known that the last clause has been variously interpreted, through a different sense given, now to , now to , and even to . Thus Chrysostom, Theodoret, &o., take it to mean, "explaining spiritual truths [of the New Testament] by [Old Testament] spiritual testimonies." Only less far-fetched is the counter-view of Theophylact, H. Grotius, and others, "explaining what the Spirit-led prophets said by what Christ has opened to us by His Spirit." But Theophylact proposed a way too, which, as it prevailed in medieval times, so also it has been common up to our day, of taking as masculine, which the late Dean Alford treated as "clearly wrong" in several editions of his Greek Testament, but gave as right in his New Testament revised (1870), as Wiclif had done in 1380.

Again our Authorized Translation preferred, with all the other early English versions except that of Geneva, the sense of "comparing" as in the Syriac, Vulgate, &c., rather of "explaining" for . And doubtless it is a natural impulse to use a meaning which is unquestionable in 2 Cor. 10:12 for the same word in 1 Cor. 2:13: so Tyndale's (1584), Cranmer's (1539), and perhaps that of Rheims (1582), though I am not quite sure what was meant by "comparing spiritual things to the spiritual," as the latter might be understood as masculine (so the Arabic) no less than as neuter. The Geneva Version (1557) gave "joining spiritual things with spiritual things," I presume after Calvin, Beza, Piscator, &c.

There are two elements for gathering the mind of God in the clause which have not been in general borne in mind adequately. First, the context as elsewhere helps to the sense of e. here demanded. Now it is certain that the apostle is describing, in verse 13, neither the revelation of divine things which the Spirit of God alone knows and can give (vers. 10-12), nor the reception of what is revealed, which is due to the power of the Spirit (vers. 14, 15), but the intermediate process of conveying in words spiritual things when disclosed that they may be received by the spiritual man. Secondly, as appears to be a carrying on the thought of speaking the things of God to others in verse 13, so is equally characteristic of the manner and means of reception. As the one aptly expresses the putting together () spiritual things with spiritual words so as to furnish that concrete whole, the word of God, so the spiritual man ., the converse sifting and examining accurately—a sense common to the New Testament and the LXX. (1 Sam. 20:12; Acts 17; 11) was a word used technically in ordinary Greek of the preliminary investigation to ascertain whether an action would lie.

Hence in my judgment the meaning of "comparing" or even of "explaining" is here shut oat; and, when we examine the present passage along with that in the second Epistle, we may readily see with certainty that the construction wholly differs, though Parkhurst is rash enough to say the contrary. For in the latter it is a question of persons only, and hence "comparing" gives the sense justly. So Wahl in his second edition rightly, though from Rose's note to Parkhurst it would seem that in his first with Schleusner he explained it as "we cannot endure to enroll or mix ourselves with" &c.—a poor sense assuredly.

Here, in one phrase, if not in both, it is a question of things, and hence the analogy disappears. In the LXX, which so constantly furnishes the true source of the Greek New Testament language, we find the verb and its derivatives used in senses more suitable to the requirement of our text, as has been often noticed. Compare Gen. 40:8, 12, 16, 18, 22; Dan. 2:4-45 (thirteen times); iv. (seven times); v. (eight times), where "interpret" or "interpretation" is meant. Again we have Num. 15:32, where it means "to determine;" also Num. 9:3; 29 six times in the sense of "ordinance," &c.

It is certain then that the most common meaning in the Septuagint, so familiar to the writers and earliest readers of the New Testament, is that of making known the previously hidden mind of God couched in a dream or vision; and that the word was also applied to a determination through a judge or law-giver speaking for God. By an easy transition thence the apostle was inspired to use it here in the sense of "communicating" (or, in a similar usage, of "expounding") spiritual things by spiritual words. "Communicating" however seems to me better, because less ambiguous than "expounding," as the point here is the fact and appropriate form of conveying spiritual truths rather than of "expounding" or explaining it when conveyed in words, which is the function of the teacher and not really in the passage at all. It is plain to him who weighs all that, though in some cases may seem to mean pretty much the same as applied to such subjects, it goes really farther. For instance, Joseph's or Daniel's task went much beyond that of an ordinary expounder of scripture; and the word which duly described it might easily pass into the sense of communicating the previously unknown things of God in language suited to them. This I feel assured is the idea in the verse under consideration.

The apostle then shows that not human wisdom but the Spirit taught the words to convey the truth of Christ now. How null then in divine things is that wisdom! Why did Corinthian eyes see differently?

There was another lesson in its place of no less weight—the incapacity of man without the Holy Spirit not merely to know or convey, but even to revive the truth of God. “But [the] natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he cannot know [them] because they are spiritually discerned; but the spiritual [man] discerneth all things while he himself is discerned by no one. For who hath known [the] Lord's mind that he should instruct him? But we have [the], mind of Christ.” (Ver. 14-16.)

This is a momentous declaration in all its parts. For the apostle by the “natural man” means man as he is born and grows up, without being born of God or the Holy Ghost given to him. He might be ever so learned, scientific, intellectual and refined; still, till quickened of the Spirit, he is . He does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for to him they are folly; nor can he learn them, so as to appropriate them, apprehending their truth, because they are spiritually discerned, and the Spirit of God he has not as unbelieving in Christ. The spiritual man on the other hand is one who is not only renewed but in the power of the Spirit. He accordingly has a divine spring of discerning while he is beyond the ken of all who are destitute of the Spirit.

It is in virtue of the Spirit of God that the believer now stands in so astonishing a place, capable of discerning all things, yet himself outside the discernment of man. How great the folly of any saint in Corinth or elsewhere yearning after human wisdom! What makes it even more striking is the application the apostle appends from Isa. 40:13. For there the prophet insists on the supremacy of Jehovah's intelligence, as before of His infinite goodness and power. Unsearchable Himself yet searching all, “who hath measured the Spirit of Jehovah, and, the man of his counsel, will teach him?” As independent of man's measuring and instruction is the Christian in divine things, and this through the Spirit of God dwelling in him. Thus the use of Isa. 64 bears witness that, as man's heart had not conceived the purpose of God before the world for our glory (not merely the nations, as Kimchi would have it, but man generally, Israel included), so God has revealed it now that Christ is crucified and received up in glory, and this by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to be in and with us. But the use of Isa. 40 goes farther; for the apostle ascribes to the Christian the mind () or intelligence of Christ, in whom God's wisdom is, and thus appropriates to us now by grace, as possessing the Holy Spirit, that which, belonging characteristically to God, is wholly independent of man and undiscoverable by him.

In short, as the revelation of God's hidden wisdom is of the Holy Spirit, so is the inspiration that conveys it, and no less truly though of a more general character is the reception of it. In the gospel as Paul knew and made it known, in the mystery of the gospel, was brought positively new truth, of which not Gentiles only but Israel or men universally were ignorant; but now it was revealed, communicated, and received in the Spirit. As He only could make it known, so He gave the words which were the due medium of conveying it, and He enables us to receive it.

How infinite then is the Christian's debt not only to the Father and the Son but to the Holy Ghost! Paul's gospel was pure truth to man, and pure truth through man: may we have self judged so as to receive it in like purity. It is the flesh—man's nature—which ever opposes the Spirit of God. There are those who count what the apostle insists on as supernatural; and they labor, some in this way, some in that, to reduce the gospel to the level of common sense. But let me warn them that if they succeed in their scheme for themselves or other men, they have lost the truth for God, who will not, to please man, give up His purpose of thus glorifying Christ by the Holy Spirit.

To naturalize Christianity is simply to ruin it. Only scripture draws a deep and marked distinction between the revelation. and inspiration of the truth on the one hand and the reception of it on the other, though all be of the Spirit, and of Him only to be of true spiritual profit. And indeed it is evident that, if the communication had not been perfect by those employed as instruments of His inspiration, the revelation of God had not been any more perfect; and consequently the authority of God attached to their writings had been not only a delusion but a deception; for Christ and the apostles treat it as no less the word of God than what He uttered without human intervention. If it be not the infinite brought into the finite we should have nothing to trust to as divine truth; we should have the finite and nothing else. Whereas the word of God, like Christ Himself, is God's entering into our circumstances, and this to give us His own grace and truth in perfection. Our use of it is another thing; and for this we are wholly dependent on the Spirit of God. But He is given to us; and we have the mind of Christ.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 2:6-10, Notes on

The apostle next explains his attitude towards those established in Christian truth, “the perfect” as they are designated here and elsewhere. To these he brought out far more than Jesus Christ and Him crucified. There is no limit or reserve. Had there been truth undisclosed in the Old Testament, secret things which belonged to Jehovah, in contrast with those revealed which had to do with Israel and their children? They are; none of them, hidden now, but shared by the Father with His children to the glory of Christ His Son.

Hence says he “But we speak wisdom among the perfect, but wisdom not of this age nor of the rulers of this age that come to naught. But we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden [wisdom] which God predetermined before the ages for our glory; which none of the rulers of the age knew (for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory) but according as it is written, Things which eye hath not seen and ear not heard, and into man's heart have not come, all that1 God prepared for those that love him, but2 God revealed to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the depths of God.” (Ver. 6-10.)

It is not then that “wisdom” is wanting to the Christian scheme; nor could this be, for Christ who is all therein is God's wisdom which has a character, height, depth, and extent proper to God. For this reason it suits His children, at least such as are weaned from the first man and the world in which he seeks activity and exaltation; it suits in a word “the perfect” or full-grown, not the babes that are absorbed in their personal wants and care at best for milk, not for the meat which a riper condition needs for its due nourishment. Wholly apart from such wisdom as Paul spoke of is “this age,” the course of the world that now is, and this not in the lower strata only but in its “rulers” “that come to naught,” little as they themselves expect it, or those who covet their place. Blessed be the grace that has revealed the mind of heaven to man on earth, it is “God's wisdom” the apostle spoke habitually and characteristically, where it was proper to be spoken, and this “in a mystery;” not meaning by this aught that was unintelligible or vague or obscure, but truth which could not be discovered by the wit of man, and was never before made known in the living oracles of God. The faithful who were settled on the great foundations of Christianity the apostle would initiate into it. All that ignore or oppose Christ come to naught: He is God's power as His wisdom.

But if Christ be God's wisdom, as He surely is, it is not His personal glory simply, but this “in a mystery.” It is not Christ as He was here presented to the responsibility of man, especially of the Jews; nor is it Christ when He returns again as the Son of man in His universal kingdom which shall not pass away. It is Christ exalted on high and invested with a new glory, outside all the old revelations, and founded on

the cross where the world, led on by its prince, rejected Him, but thereon glorified in God, and given as head over all things to the church which is His body. This therefore the apostle adds was “the hidden” wisdom, “which God predetermined before the ages for our glory.” It formed no part of His ways either in creation or in providence. The law never touched it, nor did the chosen people under law look for it. Nay, not only did the prophets ignore it altogether, but the Spirit did not speak of it in His ancient communications, though, when it was revealed, it could be seen from hints here and there from the beginning and all through that He of course knew all and said enough to justify its principles even where mast differing from all that had been meanwhile carried on.

But when the patient and full trial of man's responsibility closed in the cross which showed alike his own sin and ruin, Satan's guile and folly, and God's perfect goodness and wisdom, then was the suited moment to bring out those counsels of God in Christ for our glory, which were predetermined before all the sorrowful history of man, before even the world was created as the sphere in which his responsibility was tested. Of this man is still as then wholly ignorant, and none more than, if so much as, “the rulers of this ago.” None of them knew it when Jesus was here; and just as those that dwelt in Jerusalem and their rulers, not having known Him, fulfilled the voice of the prophets which were and are read on every sabbath by jugging and slaying Him, so “none of the rulers of this age knew; for, had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;” yet thus it was that they too instrumentally laid a basis for it. For the cross of Christ on earth answers to and is answered by the glory of God in heaven. Wondrous fact! a man exalted over all the universe, risen and glorified with all things set under His feet at God's right hand! Not only a matter of faith, but the revelation of it is also made known, as indeed only now since the cross and the ascension is it a fact. But it is a fact, and a fact revealed to the Christian, totally distinct from all Old Testament hopes, or that which shall be realized when the kingdom comes in the displayed power and glory of the millennial days.

Strikingly does the apostle proceed to set out the newness of this work and word of God in terms too often perverted through misapprehension to a mere confession of such ignorance as could not but be in the times before Christ rose and the Spirit was given. It is an application of Isa. 64:4, yet for the purpose not of direct illustration but of full contrast. The Jewish prophet most consistently was inspired to stop with the acknowledged inability of man to pierce the veil that hides the future blessedness that God has prepared for him that waits for Him. Not so the Christian apostle; for the veil is rent and we are invited to draw near now, emboldened by the blood of Jesus. Thus all things are ours, coming no less than present. We look at the things that are not seen and eternal; we seek and have our mind on the things above, not on the things that are on the earth. It is in vain to say that they are hidden from man. They were so, but assuredly are now revealed to the children of God. They are revealed that we may not doubt or remain in the dark but believe. This is the emphatic statement of the apostle. What God has prepared for those that love Him He has revealed to us by the Spirit.

Do you limit His competency or question His willingness to show us all the truth, yea, things to come, in divine love? Expressly is it added, as if to meet our hesitation, “for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the depths of God.” Such a declaration may well silence every argument of unbelief, as disposed alas! to trust in the ability of man as to distrust the gracious power of God on our behalf. The Spirit who searches all, and knows all, is now in the believer to whom all is revealed in the written word of God. He who sounds the depths of God is able to instruct His children; and He is as ready as able, being here for this as for other loving purposes worthy of God and in virtue of Christ's redemption.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, Notes on

The apostle pursues his theme—the annihilation by Christ's cross of every object flesh would cherish and vaunt. His first proof was drawn from the utter and evident infatuation which was most foolish where most it affected wisdom without God; his second from the ways of God in those brought to Himself by the gospel. As to the latter he appeals to themselves.

“For look at your calling, brethren, that not many [are] wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many highborn. But the foolish things of the world God chose that he might put to shame the wise; and the weak things of the world God chose that he might put to shame the strong things; and the lowborn things of the world and those despised God chose, [and]1 the things that are not, that he might bring to naught the things that are, so that no flesh might boast before God.2 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made wisdom to us from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption that, according as it is written, He that boasteth, let him boast in [the] Lord.” (Ver. 26-31.)

Thus the reproach which infidelity loves to cast on the gospel the apostle avows and puts forward as a fact which brings glory to God. For the gospel is the revelation of the grace which calls man from the world to Himself. Hence every ground of worldly distinction and of human merit disappears. He who alone is good and great would act in His own love and display His supreme excellence above the faults and the ruin of mankind. Yet so stubborn is the pride of guilty man that he parries the consequence of his misery and rejects the proof of his sin and danger, rather than accept the free mercy of God in Christ the Lord: and thus it becomes a question of God's love in electing sinners to eternal life in His own sovereignty, unless He would either save or condemn the race indiscriminately and thereby destroy all testimony to His holy judgment on the one hand, or to His counsels of grace on the other. If neither can be, He must choose: else none could be saved, for all have sinned, and not one sinner would trust His love in Christ for eternal life, such goodness being above all his own feelings and contrary to all experience of others. The more man reasons, the less can he believe and rest on salvation in Christ for one who, if God's word be true, deserves condemnation. He prefers to trust his own efforts with or without Christ, manifesting how little he accepts the testimony of God to the glory of Christ and to the infinite value of His work. If he is an unbeliever and lost, still more plainly is the man who defies the truth of God and despises His grace, at open war with the God who now bears with but will surely judge him. If a man values his advantages and disdains those around, he is the surer to fight against that grace which makes nothing of all that is precious in his eyes.

The Corinthians then, who were not weaned from their old admiration of man's wisdom and power and rank, the apostle bids to consider their calling. In the assembly of God before their eyes was the clearest evidence that not many were wise according to flesh, not many powerful, not many highborn. And they could not but know enough by report of Christians in other parts to be satisfied that the same features were true everywhere else. But the apostle goes “farther and shows that it is not only a fact among men (ver. 26) but a purpose on God's part. (Ver. 27-29.) He chose the foolish things of the world to put shame on the wise men; He chose the weak things of the world to put shame on the strong things: so clear is His judgment even now on what is ever apt to captivate the heart of Christians, for they love to be able to count up the wise and the world's grandeur in their own ranks, as if aught of the sort could add luster to Christ. Did not God choose the mean things of

the world, and the disdained things, the things that are not, that He might bring to naught the things that are, so that no flesh might boast in the sight of God? It is no question of what they or their circumstances seemed, but of what they really were for most when God chose them. Few of the saints had been among the wise, most knew what it was to have been arrested by the gospel from obscurity and of no influence or account among men. If God called such to the fellowship of His Son, to be one with Him now, to reign with Him soon and forever, if the wise and powerful and nobly-born were for the most part left in their possession or pursuit of alt which blinded them to the glory of Christ on the one hand and to judgment on the other, whose sin was this? whose grace that? But how unworthy and inconsistent that the Christian should yearn after or glory in flesh and advantages! Looking within and without, what believer could fail to learn that no flesh should boast before God?

Yet such a negative conclusion, important as it may be, is not enough for the Spirit of God. He would lead the heart from the emptiness of man's vanity or pride to real moral worth, to the provision of divine grace and holiness, and to that glory which shall not pass away; and all this and more he shows to be the portion of the Christian, with pointed emphasis affirming it of those he was addressing. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus.” How vast the change of nature, position, and relations for any! How blessed for those whose wretchedness in the world and according to flesh he had just set forth without disguise! Nor is the stability of the source a whit less than the character of the blessedness “of Him,” of God whose grace has given us to have our being in “Christ Jesus” “who was made to us wisdom from God.” Here is the reality, and this of blessings incalculably precious.

Christ has been made wisdom to us from God, for wisdom is the first question here; and it is now answered for the Christian in Christ, and Christ crucified, who alone thus put everyone and everything in its true place; and this it is the part of wisdom to see, as folly disarranges and misunderstands all. If philosophy left God out, it was necessarily all wrong; if it essayed to bring Him in, it subjected Him to man's mind, and this made matters, if possible, worse. Christ revealed God and blessed man, and this not by glossing over his state and sins but by suffering for them on the cross, so that God was glorified as much about evil in His death as about good in His life. He was thus made unto us wisdom from God. Not merely was the world's wisdom, flesh's wisdom set aside, but God's wisdom shown and given us in Him.

Nevertheless wisdom was not our sole want, greatly as it was needed—wisdom to its end, and not its beginning only in God's fear. The sinner has no righteousness for God; but God has for him, and this in Christ, yea, Christ Himself, for He it is who was so made to us, not wisdom alone from God, but righteousness. Man is thus set aside root and branch; God takes His place and gives all we lack in Christ. He had amply tested man's efforts under His law, which the Jew twisted to make up a hollow appearance, instead of submitting to learn by it his own insufficiency and sin. But Christ is not more surely God's wisdom than He is God's righteousness, and made this to us; for by His death God is just and can justify the believer in Jesus. Man—the believer alone truly and fully—owns himself as a sinner. The righteousness is God's, though it is Christ's work alone which could have made it not condemn but justify us. In virtue of the cross God is consistent with Himself in justifying us both freely and righteously.

Further, Christ was made to us “sanctification.” The Greek wallowed in sin, however he might sentimentalize; the Jew boasted in the law, but broke it. Christ is the measure and means and pattern of holiness to the Christian, no doubt the Spirit is the agent; by it He works by keeping not Himself but Christ before us. So we read elsewhere that, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, as there is bondage where the law rules. But we are not under law but under grace. Nor is this all; but we all beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face are changed according to the same image from glory unto glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.

Finally, He was made to us “redemption,” by which, as the order clearly shows, is meant not the forgiveness of sips which we have, but that complete deliverance from the effects of in our bodies which we await at the coming of our Lord Jesus. See Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14; 4:30.

How complete the blessing Christ has been made to us! And what a joy that we not only may but ought to boast in. Him who has so ordered and given to us! Do pious souls call on us to beware of presumption? It is the apostle, and this on the strength of Jeremiah the prophet, who calls on him that boasts to boast in Jehovah. It is therefore not rash nor wrong, but a hallowed boast. We owe it to Him, and He deserves it of us.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 1:21-25, Notes on

Men had dared to call the preaching of the cross of Christ foolishness. But who and what were they? Those that perish! Was it wise to follow such? They might vaunt of their wisdom, but this would not save them from perdition; and Jews at least, yea all who feared God and heard His ancient but living oracles, should remember that it is His way to stain the pride of human wisdom no less than human power. So it is written: God had already judged it in His word. And so experience confirms. For what has been the moral history of man?

Tremendous is the blow which the apostle here deals the wisdom of the world. The proof that God made it foolish follows in a few pregnant and unanswerable words. “For since in the wisdom of God the world through1 wisdom knew not God, God was pleased through the foolishness of the preaching to save those that believe; since both Jews ask for signs2 and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling-block and to Gentiles3 foolishness, but to those that [are] called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ God's power and God's wisdom; because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (Ver. 21-20.).

When man fell and got the knowledge of good and evil, it was the wisdom of God to leave him to himself, though not without a plain revelation which from the first held out to the eye of faith the Seed of the woman, who, bruised Himself, should bruise the serpent's head. But this did not suit the fallen child of Adam who assumed his own competency for worship or anything else without grace from God or the sense of his own ruin which would have made him feel its necessity. And the world grew up till its corruption and violence were so unbearable that it became morally imperative to sweep off the guilty race in the deluge. Even after this solemn intervention of God in judgment the world only became more subtly evil. It ceased to retain God in knowledge; it set up the powers of nature in heaven and earth, deifying them, and degrading themselves into whatever the demons behind those objects might drag their votaries. Thus Satan's triumph over the nations now heathen was complete; for their religion itself most of all corrupted them, its symbols being also identified with every moral iniquity, and their wisdom bound them fast in that debasing slavery, seeking at best to explain, or explain away, all that misrepresented and supplanted the true God.

The Corinthians too of all men should have known how powerless is the wisdom of the world to deliver man from the grossest self-pleasing and the lusts which, while shunning the light, usurped the name of a god, and only proved how completely God Himself was unknown For evil is too serious and fatal to be overlooked, and the creature would fain roll it off from himself on God, and is thus necessitated to attenuate its moral consequences as well as its contrariety to the Creator. To this effort, resisted by conscience till it is utterly seared, it is philosophy lends its baleful torch, but thus, as man is unjudged, so is God lost for the soul. Were His holy nature and His righteous judgment bowed to, man must own his iniquity and humbly seek a door of escape through divine mercy. But such was not the course of the world. Nothing is a man so slow to acknowledge as his own badness; and in such a state religion is only a blind for the soul and a sop for God, of all vanities the greatest and most pernicious.

It appears to me that Calvin4 has mistaken the force of the reasoning, as if by the wisdom of the world was meant the workmanship of the universe, an illustrious token and clear manifestation of His wisdom. This is one of the two witnesses adduced for God to heathen conscience in Rom. 1, the other being that knowledge of God which they possessed till the flood and after it, when first they fell into creature worship. One must not be surprised that not a few adopt the rendering “by the revelation of God's wisdom,” that is, in His works with or without His law. I believe it to be simply a question of God's wise ordering of things that the folly of idolatrous man should be apparent, and so the need of His salvation by the cross of Christ be the more felt when it was preached. By . is meant “by wisdom” in the abstract or “by its wisdom,” either of which would require the article in Greek. I do not think that Stanley and Alford are right in taking the phrase as “through the wisdom [of God]” just mentioned, though of course the article there too would be proper. The latter wisdom seems to me contradistinguished from the former, the one self-exalting and destructive, the other real and righteous altogether.

Thus in God's wisdom ends the world's wisdom: He is unknown, the knowledge of whom in Christ is eternal life. And what did God in presence of this pretentious wisdom which was thus the guiltiest folly? “It pleased God by the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe.” The world had either adopted the most degrading notions of polytheism, or it had tried to escape superstition by the dreary blank of pantheism and even atheism. Man being now fallen was not prevented (at least after the flood) from thus in his presumption proving his ignorance of God; but God showed His grace as matchless as His wisdom; for when the world's wisdom had spent itself weary and worn in its idolatrous devices or in the waste of skepticism which those abominations provoked, God was pleased not to close the revolting theater of man's rebellion, whether religious or irreligious, by judgment, but contrariwise to save. And as salvation to be open and effectual for sinners must be by grace, so could it only be by faith. (Compare the reasoning of Rom. 4) In this way alone could it be sure to all that believe; for the essence of faith is that the worth is found in the object believed, the efficacy lies in what He, the Savior, has wrought for us, not we for Him, however truly we do, when believers, seek to please and serve Him. Thus is God glorified in this as in all things by Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever.

Accordingly it will be noticed by the careful reader that the apostle here speaks not of preaching exactly as a mere instrument, but of the thing preached. Such is the force resulting from the form of the word, which with others I have translated “the preaching.” This the Jews derided, as well as the Greeks. It was to them foolishness; nor need we wonder, if they saw not the glory of the person of Christ given to die in God's love to sinners. For what could seem less reasonable to the natural mind, than for a crucified man to be the only Savior from sins and the wrath of God? Yet this is the truth, preached, .; and salvation is the fruit of believing it. Grace not only gave the Son of God thus to suffer, but takes care to send out everywhere the proclamation, that souls may hear, believe, and be saved.

Men naturally despise the cross, who do not believe either that their sins deserve divine judgment or that He in grace bore that judgment thereon. Their depth of need is unfelt, and hence other and lesser objects occupy them. The world is pre-occupied or turns elsewhere: “since both Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek wisdom.” Visible tokens were vouchsafed of God when He sent the Lord Jesus to the land of Israel. Never since the world began had there been such a cloud of witnesses in this kind; but what can satisfy the heart where, all is alienated from God? The Jews overlooked all He gave and asked for a sign as if none had appeared. Greeks expected nothing from God; but, if the object of their search was wisdom, they never learned its first lesson in the fear of Jehovah.

This obstinacy or levity of unbelief did not dishearten the apostle, but rather stimulated him in the work near to his heart. “But we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling-block and to Gentiles foolishness.” It is not here simply the blood shed that makes atonement; and it is more to say “crucified” than dead; for though both declare the end of man in the flesh, there is the extreme of shame and weakness in the cross beyond all else. That God then should save by virtue of that cross, where the world saw the worst of human suffering and humiliation was to silence that wisdom, proving that to be folly which dared so to think and speak of His wisdom. Over the stone of stumbling fell the Jews who would only have a Messiah in power and glory. So will He come shortly, but where then will those Jews find themselves who were offended by His stooping to the cross in order to save those that believe? Where the Gentiles who preferred their own ideas and vaunted reasonings to the mighty work then wrought at infinite cost? Like the lightning shall the Son of man shine in His day; but first must He suffer many, things and be rejected by this generation. For it was morally impossible for God's kingdom to be till sin was judged in the cross. How senseless and slow of heart were even disciples to see that so it must be if God was to be glorified and man righteously blessed and saved! But “to the called Christ,” and Christ thus crucified, “is God's power and God's wisdom; because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” (Vers. 24, 25.) Any other way had compromised sin or made salvation impossible. The cross of Christ is the fullest display of God's judgment of sin and of His love to the sinner. What men taunted as foolishness and weakness, the incarnate Word suffering on a gibbet, equally proves man's utter rain and God's saving mercy. So did the Savior endure the judgment of sin that the believer might be saved. Is it not then wiser and stronger than men? Did not the resurrection, does not the gospel, prove it so?

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 1:17-20, Notes on

It is not that the apostle Paul slights baptism: who could that accepts it as Christ's institution? Impossible that he could have used such language if baptism be the means of life to the soul, as so many falsely teach. Yet we can hardly conceive any of the twelve speaking as he does here. “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not in wisdom of word, lest the cross of Christ should be made vain.” (Ver. 17.) The rest were expressly sent to baptize, which they did either personally or using others for the purpose. Paul too was baptized and did baptize; and no apostle unfolds the observance in so profound a way as we find in Rom. 6, Gal. 3, and Col. 2. But 1 Cor. 11 shows us that the Lord’s supper was revealed directly, not merely accepted as he found like baptism. And when we reflect, we perceive that the rite is not

the seal of union with Christ, but the individual owning of Him who died and rose again, buried with Christ into death, as the former sets forth the communion of His body, for which we need His ascension and the sending down of the Holy Ghost, with which is bound up all the doctrine of the church, of which Paul pre-eminently became minister. (Col. 1:25.)

But Paul as emphatically became “minister of the gospel” (Col. 1:23); and so he was sent by Christ to preach it, as he tells us here, “not in wisdom of word,” as the Corinthians liked to hear, “lest the cross of Christ should be made vain.” It seems to be philosophic speculation and not rhetoric only which he denounces thus strongly. And philosophy leaves no room for divine love on the one side, or for man's utter ruin on the other: the cross of Christ maintains both in the highest degree.

By the cross of Christ is meant much more than the means of pardon for the sinner. To treat it only as the great remedy for man's need, however true as far as it goes, is to rob it of an immense deal of its importance as well as to obscure the truth and shut out God's glory. For in that most stupendous of all facts, what has not come to issue? God's holy hatred and judgment of sin; His amazing love of the sinner; the infinite grace, humiliation, and suffering of the Savior; the audacity and craft of Satan; the abominable wickedness of man, under the best possible circumstances and, spite of the greatest benefits, without cause to justify or excuse to palliate: all met, as nowhere else, in the cross. There are the pretensions of man crushed; sin condemned and put away; Satan defeated and vanquished; judgment borne; and God glorified in Christ who knew no sin made sin for us, that we might be made God's righteousness in Him. There only indeed divine attributes and ways, which our sin had otherwise seemed to set aside or at variance, are now conciliated forever on behalf of those that believe, and a firm basis laid for the ruined creation, as well as the people of God, to be made new and shine unto eternal ages to the glory of God. Yet all this would be rendered vain by that wisdom of speech which some in the Corinthian church were ignorantly affecting and blaming Paul because it was far from him.

But the Corinthians were in danger who shrank from the facts of the gospel and desired to hear the philosophy of the Christian scheme. “For the word of the cross is to those that perish foolishness, but to us that are to be saved it is God's power.” (Ver. 18.) The cross bespeaks the lowest extreme of human shame and suffering. It was the severest penalty for a slave. That the Son of God should stoop not merely to the nature of man but to the death of the cross, and this in atonement for man to God as well as in rejection of God by man, seems the depth of folly to those who, ignorant of their own sin-fullness and of the holiness of God, must needs perish, living and dying as they are. That He must suffer in order to save supposes the hopeless ruin of the race. But it is also irreconcilable with every feeling of the natural heart that He would stoop so low to suffer for His enemies, and that God would give Him up to do so. For philosophy knows nothing truly of love in God, any more than of total ruin in man: the cross proclaims both, and that He who hung there in grace, suffering for our sin, that God might deliver us righteously, was Himself God over all as surely as He was man without sin. For the gospel was no effort or device of man's wit. Yea, the word of the cross is the deepest offense and the sheerest foolishness to him; but it is God's power, not wisdom only, to believers, “to us that are to be saved,” for here, to bring it the more home, the apostle treats it as a personal fact instead of continuing his abstract statement. Salvation here, as elsewhere in this Epistle, is regarded as not complete till the Lord comes; it takes in the whole work of bringing us through till we are conformed to Christ in resurrection glory.

In fact the seeking for thoughts” and words palatable to the world argues a mind at issue with God, who had fully pronounced on its best wisdom as folly in divine things. It is worthy of note that the apostle quotes in proof God's sentence on Israel by the prophet Isaiah (29:14). I cannot agree with those who fail to see the pertinency of this testimony, for it would be impossible to find, out of the many scriptures which declare the insufficiency of human resources, one more to the purpose which the apostle had in view, and therefore serving better to warn the Corinthian saints. “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and put away the prudence of the prudent. Where [is the] wise, and where scribe, and where disputer of this age? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the1 world.” (Vers. 19, 20.) In the last words are seen not more than an illustrative allusion to Isa. 33, where there is a burst of surprise at the deliverance from the scornful power of the enemy, as here a triumphant challenge over the failure of its proud pretensions against God.

It is well to remember that the digression here begun but carried on much farther, in which the world's wisdom is shown to slight and oppose but to be judged by the cross of Christ, is none the less really connected with the party spirit and divisions of the saints at Corinth which the apostle has been denouncing, as he will be found to do yet more in chapter iii. Indeed it was their value for what the world esteems as wisdom which had wrought to the depreciation of Paul and to the advantage of those whom he afterward designates “false apostles.” (2 Cor. 11)

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 1:10-16, Notes on

The apostle begins now to touch one of the evils which particularly dishonored the Lord and injured the saints at Corinth. Their party spirit was a sore grief to his heart. Not only did it hinder mutual comfort of love in their midst but the testimony they owed His name before the world.

Compared with what has followed since, or even what the New Testament elsewhere discloses, it might seem but a little beginning, but it was the beginning of a great evil. For the allowance of such fleshly preferences and the consequent formation of parties lets loose the activities of the natural mind and feeling, goes out ward into passionate zeal or dislike, and well if it end not in helpless heterodoxy and open insubjection to the Lord.

“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,1 that ye all say the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you,2 but that ye be made perfect in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been shown to me concerning you, my brethren, by those [of the house] of Chloe, that there are strifes among you.3 But I say this, that each of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized unto the name of Paul? I thank God 4 that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius, that no one should say that ye were baptized5 unto my name. And I baptized6 also the household of Stephanas; further I know not whether I baptized any other.” (Ver. 10-16.)

Apostle though he was, and the one who had not only instructed them in Christ, but begotten them through the gospel, he appeals, to them here by that “name which most intimately deals with the believer, and most solemnly even with the professor, the center of unity, as the Holy Spirit is its bond. By that name, if by any means, would his exhortation come home to their souls. He is jealous of the honor of Him, their Lord, whom their discords compromised. Where was the witness to men in these rival schools with their misguided chiefs, to the fellowship of God's

Son? He exhorts them therefore that they should “all say the same thing.” For the Philippian saints he earnestly desired that they might “think the same thing,” and this by thinking one thing. Of these, as being more experienced and in a more spiritual state, he could not but expect more. Nor is it the like-mindedness one toward another pressed on the Roman saints.

Would the apostle then have been satisfied with the same uniform confession outwardly? By no means. With this he begins, according to the wisdom of the Spirit which directed him; for it is surely unbecoming in reformers or men who can easily follow reformers in what was wrong, to criticize an inspired writer or presume that they can draw nicer distinctions or arrange the truth better, than Paul7 Then he adds “that there be no divisions among you,” of which, their party-ties were the expression; and lastly he beseeches that they maybe “made perfect” (see Eph. 4:12 as well as 2 Cor. 13:9) or wholly united,” in the same, mind and in the same judgment.” Not that he means by this exactly the will, so that there should be a complete division of the soul, the first referring to faith and this second to love,8 however important all this may, be is its place; for s signifies mind viewed as intelligent faculty, as the opinion or judgment it form?. He wanted them to have a nicety of intelligent opinion. They were defective where they were proud, as men generally are.

Nor does the apostle hesitate to write on the information which he had received (and indeed it was too plain and precise in its character to doubt its accuracy), nor to tell them its trustworthy source. A godly woman's household might be a particularly good means of ascertaining; as it also gives warrant for another day. It is the same apostle who, if he reprobates silly women laden with divers lusts, shows how a Phoebe: or a Persis, a Prisca and a Mary, an Euodia and a Syntyche, should be valued and cared for. He can: here write with full confidence of what he had learned from Chloe's household.

The divisions were as yet within the assembly, not rents from it, but they tended to this end, as we are expressly told in 1 Cor. 11:18, 19. No conclusion can be less well founded than that the separation into denominations is lawful, while an evil spirit within is the sin; for this schismatic working is evil most of all because it leads those who are heady and unsubject to that worst result. It is assumed here that the assembly has not compromised by unholy tolerance of false doctrine or any such evil as would make it a duty to disown those who would retain the title when they have forfeited its true character.

Alas! at Corinth the saints seem to have been largely infected with party spirit. “But I say this that one saith I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ: “this last to my mind as intelligible as any of the others;9 for the wrong was not in any of those named, but in such as set up their names out of their own vanity and love of opposition. And the worst of all, I doubt not, was that party which plumed itself on its superior spirituality. They had done with men.10 Paul, Apollos, Cephas, were beneath their aspirations. Not the servants, but the Master was their watchword. They disliked the high claims, especially of Paul. For their part they would cleave to the Lord's own precept: one is your teacher, one your leader, and all ye are brethren. Thus not unfrequently does self-exaltation among Christians disguise itself unconsciously (and unconsciously, because the state is bad, and the heart too long away from the Lord in practice); whereas it is evident that he who really loves and bows to the Lord does for this very reason honor His servants for their work's sake, and according to the place He has set them in. The corruption of the best thing is truly said to be the worst; and so it was here where the specious plea of such as abjured all but Christ might seem to be the only thing right and spiritual in Corinth, divided as the assembly was. How important, it is, and now as then, to judge righteous judgment, not according to appearances!

It is well to note that the evil at Corinth was the converse of what the apostle meant in his address to the Ephesian elders. (Acts 20:30.) For in the one it was the sin of the disciples,” in the other of the rulers. Our only security is in that subjection of heart to Christ, which estimates what is of Him wherever it may be, and walks in dependence on Him, come what will. I had made the reflection before noticing that Calvin fell into this very confusion.11 Perhaps in Presbyterianism, as being of a democratic character, it is harder to see that the mass of the disciples have their snares no less than those who guide. It is however as sure from scripture as it is evident in experience. No thing, nor person, escapes the vigilance of the enemy. How blessed that all are under the eye of perfect love in our Lord: may we be guided by it!

“Is Christ divided?” asks the indignant apostle. Is He not the Head of that one body the church to which they all belonged? It is a whole Christ to whom all His own belong and. who Himself belongs to all. To think of dividing Him would be as irrelevant as absurd. They might divide, not He: what an inconsistency if they valued Him! But this is followed up by the further query, “Was Paul crucified for you, or were ye baptized unto the name of Paul?” To state the question was to render the true answer certain and necessary to the Christian; yet how many since have overlooked both! So blinding is the influence where the first man is allowed to take the place of the Second. Apostles and others have died, yea, been crucified, but Christ alone for as, as it is to Him we have been baptized, not to the twelve, still less to other men.

Far different was the loyalty of the apostle to Christ. Therefore does he not scruple to express his gratitude to God that he had baptized so few personally at Corinth: an impossible subject for thanksgiving, if baptism be the means of new birth, for in this case he who loved God and man must rejoice the more, the more he baptized. On the other hand there is no real slight put on Christian baptism as our burial with Christ unto death; the appointed outward sign of subjection to Him who died for us and rose again.

Its solemn import is derived from the objective truth signified by it, not from the position or power of the baptizer, nor from any qualities of the baptized, whatever be the Lord's will as to either. But the apostle owns the good hand of the Lord in ordering things so that in fact Paul had baptized only a very few out of the many Corinthians who, on hearing the gospel, believed and were baptized (Acts 18:8): had he actually baptized the mass, it might have given a more tangible excuse to those who affected his name at Corinth. But there can be little doubt that those he did baptize were among those who stood comparatively faithful to the Lord there.

It may be mentioned here that Professor Olshausen notices it as a surprising circumstance that the apostle should not have reasoned on the import of baptism itself in order to cherish his argument, but rather on the providential history of the facts as to it, so far as he was concerned. Dean Alford also urges the last clause of verse 16 as important against those who maintain the absolute omniscience of the inspired writers on every topic which they handle.

Do the two divines seem to write with enough of reverence? Both forgot, if they seriously knew what it is to believe, that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul. Does He not know better than any when to urge this topic, when that? And as to the inspired writers, I know of no sober believer who holds their omniscience, but that of Him who employed them to communicate the truth. It is common, but incorrect, to speak of their infallibility; whereas evidently none can be said to be infallible but God.

The true statement of inspiration is not that the writer became omniscient or infallible, but that the Holy Ghost so controlled his writing as to convey the truth without admixture of error and perfectly for His own design. Hence He might with perfect consistency withhold absolute recollection on a given point here, or a distinct command from the Lord on another point, as in chapter vii.

But all this leaves unimpaired the divine authority of what He does convey or command as from the Lord. Those orthodox as to inspiration may be incorrect in phrase or a shade of thought; but this in no way lessens the seriousness—indeed sin—of enfeebling inspiration, especially in these perilous times, when God's word is the grand resource of the faithful. For the simple but firm faith that it is His word is not only a truth in itself clearly revealed, but it is the basis and support of every other. Weaken inspiration, and you jeopardy all else that concerns God and man, and may end with nothing better than human ideas.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 1:4-9, Notes on

After his address and usual greeting, the first thing the apostle does is to let them know that he always thanks God for them. That he should write thus to the saints in Rome, Ephesus, Colosse, Thessalonica, is not surprising; and the wonder to some may be increased when it is observed that he withholds it in writing to the assemblies in Galatia. But the wisdom and the propriety of his procedure are apparent to the spiritual eye. The Corinthians were suffering the consequences of fleshly wisdom and worldliness; the Galatians had let in law, and thus fallen from grace, to the subversion of the truth of the gospel. Hence the reserve of the apostle's tone to the latter; whilst he begins to the former (far more grossly fallen) with the recognition of all he could thank God for in their case. Without some such assurance, where indeed would be the ground of appeal? What the standard by which to judge themselves? It was the more necessary because of their low and disorderly state, as well as of the reproofs that must follow.

On the other hand it is a grave misconception of their state and of the apostle's words that he alludes to any proof of maturity and richness of their spiritual life. He takes care to give prominence to the source which had so bountifully supplied the assembly in Corinth; but there is not a word that implies a spiritual state, much less maturity in it, such as could comfort his heart in thinking of them. He knew his God sufficiently to be sure that there had been no lack on His part.

“I thank my 1God always concerning you for the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus; that in everything ye were enriched in him, in all discourse and all knowledge, according as the testimony of Christ2 was confirmed in you, so that ye come not short in any gift, awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you until [the] end, unimpeachable in the day3 of our Lord Jesus Christ. God [is] faithful by whom ye were called into [the] fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Ver. 4-6.)

Thus the occasion of thanksgiving was the grace of God bestowed on them in virtue of Christ Jesus. But this is defined immediately after. They had been in everything made rich in Him. In spiritual discernment of His glory and feeling of His grace? in enjoyment of Christ and devotedness to His name? In these respects alas! they were defective, as all that follows shows. He means, as he says, in every sort of expression of the truth, and all knowledge, in what was preached or taught, as well as in apprehension; for God had amply é confirmed the testimony of Christ which Paul above all with others had rendered in their city. Many of the Corinthians, as we are told in Acts 18, heard, believed, and were baptized. But there was more than this: the power of the Spirit wrought largely and mightily among them. And this was the characteristic token of the assembly of God—not more truly, but far more sensibly, then than now. The issue was that they came behind in no gift, clearly not in what is called the inward grace of the spiritual life, but in communication to others and manifestation of power, as in 1 Cor. 12.

This is strengthened by the way the saints at Corinth are next characterized: “awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is not that aspect of our Lord's return which will unfold and express His grace to His own,4 but rather that which deals with conscience now, as it by and by will display their faithful or unfaithful employment of all entrusted to their charge. Every saint who walks with God meanwhile and judges intelligently of the growing miseries of Christendom, not to speak of the world at large and of man, has love for the appearing of the Lord, as the time when He shall be exalted and we are to reign with Him, the power of Satan being publicly and effectually expelled from the earth. But our proper hope is that Christ will come and fetch us to the Father's house; and so shall we be forever with the Lord. The Corinthians however are hereby reminded of Him who will judge of every one's work; when each shall receive his own reward according, to his own labor. They needed to be exercised in self-judgment whether they were serving the Lord with the manifestations of the Spirit distributed to each. And hence also the repeated and striking way in which the name of “our Lord Jesus Christ” is brought before them here.

Not that a word is said to induce a doubt of His goodness or love to them. Never does a soul more need to hold fast grace than when it is probed and searched by the unsparing and all-detecting word of God. Hence the apostle does not hesitate to say that the Lord should also confirm them to the last unimpeachable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. How sad then that a Christian should be to Christ's reproach now! “When Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory. But this to the apostle becomes by the Spirit only one cogent motive more for urging us to mortify our members that are on the earth. It is the day of our Lord which here again calls our responsibility into play. And as this does and must act on conscience, being in truth intended to do this, so it makes the saint feel the need and value of what the apostle adds as closing his introduction— “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Ver. 9.) If He has called, will He not also perform? Phil. 1:6 Thess. 5:24. But His calling to the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord is not more sure in His grace than serious in its present claim on us that we cast no shade of unfaithfulness on both, sullying His name that is named on us, to which the very world binds us, loose as may be its sense of what is due to Him whom it knows not. How did the Corinthians answer to that call then? How do we now?

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 1:1-3, Notes on

The Epistle on which we are about to enter gives us more than any other an inner view of the church or assembly of God. It does not, like the Epistle to the Romans, lay the foundation of divine righteousness. But it is not at all contracted in its scope. It deals with the practical conduct

of the Christian, as well as the public walk of the assembly. It maintains the authority of Paul's ministry as apostle. It denounces party spirit. It exposes worldly wisdom; it insists upon the power of the Spirit. It urges godly order both in the Lord's institution of the eucharist, and in the use of the gifts or spiritual manifestations. It commands holy discipline. It reproves litigiousness,—above all before the world. It presses personal purity; it counsels the saints as to social and family difficulties, as to their relation with the heathen, as to decorum, privately or publicly, in men or women. Finally, it meets their speculations as to the future state, and shows how an error as to this jeopards soundness of faith as to Christ Himself, holiness of walk meanwhile, and the brightness and strength of the Christian's hope. Nor does it withhold the light of God from a matter seemingly so trivial as the mode of collection for the poor saints, whilst it adjusts also the mutual relations of those who labored on the. spot, or of those who might visit them.

From this sketch, slight as it is, one sees how varied and momentous are the topics handled in the first Epistle to the Corinthians; and an examination in detail will manifest the holy wisdom, the burning zeal, the delicacy of affection, the admirable elasticity with which the apostle was enabled by the inspiring Spirit to throw himself heart and mind and soul and strength yet always in the name of the Lord, into their most critical circumstances. For he writes from Ephesus, not far from the close of his three years' abode in that city, when, to any other man than Paul, it might have seemed that his labors for a year and a half at Corinth were fatally compromised. But not so: the Lord, who had cheered him on soon after his arrival at Corinth, strengthened his faith now so severely taxed at Ephesus. “I have much people in this city” were words then to stimulate, now to sustain his hope in God spite of many fears, and in the midst of the deepest exercises of heart. Of all this and more the Epistle bears the impress, and every now and then lets out the expression.

“Paul, a called1 apostle of Jesus Christ2 by God's will, and Sosthenes the brother, to the assembly of God that is in Corinth,3 [persons] sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints, with all that call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, theirs4 and ours; grace to you and peace from God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ver. 1-3.)

To the Roman brethren Paul began by introducing himself as “a bondman of Jesus Christ.” This he omits to the Corinthians to whom he speaks of himself at once as a “called apostle of Jesus Christ.” The difference is due to the facts before him. There had been no undermining of his ministry at Rome, where indeed personally he was a stranger. At Corinth it was well-known to the saints how truly he was a bondman of Jesus Christ. Had not his very hands borne witness to it, night and day caring spiritually for the saints with the Lord's glory before his eyes, even in that outward work by which he had refrained from being a burden to them? To both he writes formally as an “apostle,” and this, not by birth, not by acquirement, not by election of man, but as “called,” that is, by calling of God. Both he reminds that they themselves were saints, and this too by calling. It was grace which chose them as saints, grace that chose him, not as a saint only, but as an apostle. Such is the principle of Christian ministry, as well as of the salvation of souls or Christianity itself. It is “by God's will,” as he adds; “a called apostle of Jesus Christ by God's will,” not by his own ability or merit, nor by other men's choice. God's sovereign goodness is the spring in every respect. What can be more blessed? We do well to ponder it, and to repudiate whatever is inconsistent with it. It is God then, it is grace which, as it calls saints, so also calls to His service. How different from the ecclesiastical thought and style of modern times! Paul is not what he was in the church” by divine providence” or “by divine permission,” for this might be where the person was alien from His mind or will, God merely overruling for His own secret purpose. And it is not denied that such cases may be, as of old in Balaam, so under Christianity; but how awful for all these who intrude thus unbidden to speak in the name of the Lord! For many shall say to the Judge in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied through Thy name, and through Thy name cast out demons, and through Thy name done many wonderful works? But He will Say, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

Beyond controversy it is God, not man, who sets in the church, as we are expressly told in 1 Cor. 12:28, and this applies to “teachers” as distinctly as to “apostles.” They never are in scripture called by man. The church never chose them, as it did those entrusted with its funds for the poor. Nor did apostles or their envoys choose teachers or preachers as they did elders; for these were a local charge, those are gifts set as members in the body of Christ as a whole. Such are the biblical facts, and the principle on which this distinction depends.

It is gross ignorance to confound ministry with priesthood, and to cite for the former what the Epistle to the Hebrews (v. 4) says of the latter, as applied from Aaron to Christ. Yet if it did apply, it would go to prove, not men's calling to the ministry, as they term it, but the exclusive call of God; for in priesthood God alone chose, though this after Aaron (and we may add perhaps Phinehas) by birth successionally, whilst the consecration was in view of all the congregation. In ministry as in the church, where the Holy Spirit dwells and acts, who is a spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind, we are entitled to look for reality;5 in the flesh or in the world one must be often content to let the merest forms pass, bound to pay to each the honor owe, even where the object of it may be personally undeserving, as is laid down in Rom. 13, 1 Peter 2 The church is, and is responsible to be, the pillar and ground of the truth, the epistle of Christ known and read of all men; and therein, by virtue of the Holy Ghost dwelling in it, is power and obligation to judge according to the word of God whatever is inconsistent with its profession corporately as well as individually.

We see next that the apostle associates with himself, here “Sosthenes the brother,” as in the second Epistle Timothy. If the Sosthenes here named were the chief of the synagogue who seems to have succeeded Crispus on his conversion, if he were himself converted after his ignominious failure to hurt Paul before Gallio the proconsul of Achaia, at Corinth, we can see with what propriety he, no longer the Jewish adversary but the brother in Christ, should thus accompany the apostle in this address to the Corinthian saints. But I affirm nothing, as there is no direct evidence, and the name was not uncommon. He was certainly known at Corinth and was then with the Apostle at Ephesus.

Notice now in what character the Corinthian believers are addressed: “to the assembly of God that is in Corinth.” It is in the strictest connection with the scope of the Epistle, as this is of course according to the true wants there and then. It was not because of a godly few amongst a vast multitude; of ungodly persons. What unacquaintance with the mind of God! It is not so that holy scripture speaks. They constituted God's habitation there by the Spirit's presence. This is the real character and distinctive constituent. No ungodly multitude could be the church or assembly of God; nor have a godly few as such any virtue to be themselves the assembly, still less to make others so by their own presence in their midst. Only the Spirit of God sent down from heaven makes those whom He gathers and with whom He dwells to be the assembly of God. The state of the Corinthians was frightfully bad, perilous to all, and such as to raise the gravest fears as to. some. But we must recollect that, in commanding them to deal with the most scandalous case of all, the apostle goes on the ground of the spirit being saved in the day of the Lord Jesus; and that the second epistle exhorts the saints to confirm love by taking back the offender as one at length roused to deep self-judgment and in danger of being swallowed up with excessive sorrow. No; the assembly of God is liable to the inroad of the most serious evils through ignorance and unwatchfulness; but it does not forfeit its character, if duly constituted, till it renounces all holy discipline by refusing to judge according to the word when evil is brought before it. For it is responsible, if it have let in evil, to put it out in the

Lord's name which it bears. And the second epistle is of the greatest value among other things in this also, that it proves how the apostle's confidence was justified in such a clearing of conscience, as led him to expect the work of vindicating the Lord to go on still farther, and thus maintain the character of the assembly of God which grace had given the brethren in Corinth.

But it is well also to observe that in apposition with that character stands more, “[persons] sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints.” The construction is peculiar, but the language is exact. The term ^ (“sanctified “) is in what is called a rational concord with . It would not be correct to speak of the assembly as, any more than as , though those who compose it are both. But the fact that they were sanctified, and that the form of the word does not mean merely a process going on but their character as stamped with separation to God in Christ Jesus, and thus saints by calling, not merely called to be saints, was a most impressive appeal to their hearts and consciences, especially in the crisis at which things had then arrived in the Corinthian assembly.

It is incorrect to say that here, or anywhere else, justification is meant rather than sanctification. The fact is that, while almost all admit sanctification in the practical sense as a matter of growth and so allowing of degrees among those justified, it seems to be forgotten that scripture speaks of all those who are actually born of God as being sanctified from the beginning of the work of grace in their souls. Compare 1 Cor. 6:11, and 1 Peter 1:2. And so far is it from being true that the call to holiness in practice is enfeebled by this primary and absolute sanctification of all real Christians, that contrariwise it is this setting apart to God which is the ground and a powerful support and a solemn motive to consistency with Christ Jesus in whom we are thus sanctified. It is in virtue of God's will we are said (in Heb. 10:10) to be sanctified through the offering of Christ's body once for all, as elsewhere the Spirit is viewed as its agent. Thus all the Godhead take their part in this great work from the outset and indeed right through. And this is confirmed by its result from the first; for those who participate in this sanctification are saints, “called saints” (not a mere holy nation by birth like Israel), whilst they are exhorted to follow holiness no less than peace.

But there is an addition that claims our attention: “with all that call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, with theirs and ours."6 (Ver. 2.) It is of the deepest interest and value, as it connects the epistle with the entire field of Christian profession. There is no hint of limiting the address to “he Christians in all Achaia, as we see in 2 Cor. 1:1. And the difference is the more striking as God foresaw that men would ere long seek to tamper with the application of this epistle beyond all others, and seek to limit it to the apostolic age when the gifts () were, in full force. The unbelief that would make the Corinthian assembly an exception to the order in other places is still more strikingly provided against. Compare for this chapters iv. 17; vii. 17; x. 16; xiv. 36, 37; xvi. 1. Further, the clause seems to me one of those which, while applying then to those who bore the name of the Lord truthfully, would acquire a meaning more distinct as the professing mass became more and more distant from the true character of the assembly of God, when Christianity will be well nigh swamped in Christendom.

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and [the] Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ver. 3.) Such is the initiatory wish or prayer of the apostle here as in Rom. 1:7, from God in His relation of Father to us, from, Jesus Christ as Lord (compare chap. 8:6): an association however impossible in an inspired writing; derogatory anywhere, if they were not one in the unity; of the divine nature. True and sovereign favor was the spring, grace the result that would prove and magnify its source, shedding its light even on those too blind to see beyond the effect. Be it ours, enjoying the gift, to adore the Giver.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 16:13-24, Notes on

After these details the apostle gives a few pithy words of exhortation “Watch, stand in the faith, play the man, be strong.1 Let all your doings be in love.” (Vers. 18, 14.) They are words eminently suited to the state of things at Corinth, besides being wholesome for all saints in all times and places. Carelessness had marked them as a company, and therefore were they now called to vigilance. They had allowed speculations to work even on foundation truths of revelation; and so they needed to cleave firmly to the deposit of faith. They had been walking after the manner of man ( ), and had shrank from reproach and suffering, feebly dreading the world's opinions; they are urged, therefore, to quit themselves in a manly way (), and to be strong. They had need also, and above all, that whatever they did might be done lovingly. It is the final application of that which chapter 13 had opened out—the blessed energy of the divine nature, which lives and delights in the good of others; and it is the fitting preface to his next topic.

“Now I beseech you, brethren—ye know the house of Stephanas,2 that it is a first-fruit of Achaia,3 and that they appointed themselves to the saints for service—that ye also be subject to such, and to every one that cooperateth and laboreth.” (Vers. 15, 18.)

This entreaty of the apostle was, and is, of the highest, for the house of Stephanas represents a considerable class of laborers, if we reckon them up in every place where God has His assembly. They stand on a distinct footing from such servants of the Lord as Timothy, on the one hand, or Apollos on the other. They do not answer to one designated by prophecy, specially gifted to serve with an apostle; neither were they men eloquent and mighty in the scriptures, who from small beginning learned the truth more exactly, and could, in a freer action of the Spirit, either boldly speak before adversaries, or contribute much to those who believed through grace.

The house of Stephanas had no such prominent, wide, or energetic sphere; but they devoted themselves in an orderly way to the saints for service. It was their regular work, not a thing taken up perfunctorily now and then; and this, which some dare to deride as self-appointment, is as thoroughly maintained and commended by the apostle in the name of the Lord, as the call of a patron or of a congregation to the ministry of the word is absolutely unscriptural, and opposed to all sound and holy principle. The apostle establishes their attitude and activity as of God, whose love gave them a heart toward the saints in service. They were not elders. Indeed it would seem that as yet none had been chosen at Corinth to the work of oversight by the apostle. But none the less does he call on the saints also to range themselves under such, and every one sharing the work, and toiling. We see the same thing in Rom. 12 and 1 Thess. 5, where no trace, of presbyters appear, and where, in fact, we can hardly conceive of their existence. But there were those who ruled, or took the lead, those who toiled among the saints, and presided over them in the Lord, entirely apart from exterior appointment. As this was of moment to sanction in those early days, so is it of at least equal importance in our own time, when we have no apostle, or apostolic delegate like Titus, to visit the assemblies, and to establish elders, as of old. The same holy liberty, the same solemn responsibility, and the same apostolic warrant, abide for our day of weakness and need. How evident the gracious wisdom of the Lord, while thus naming but incidentally, as it might have seemed, the house of Stephanas, really providing for all that call on His name, in every place, and at any time of the church's career here below! How blessed in His eyes is the

subjection of the saints, not only to such devoted servants, but to every one joined in the work, and laboring.

Another feature of interest is the delicacy with which the apostle notices some from Corinth who had not forgotten his temporal necessities. “But I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas, and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, because what was lacking on your part these filled up; for they4 refreshed my spirit and yours: own then those that are such.” (Vers. 17, 18.) It would appear from both epistles that the help did not come from the assembly as such, but from these three individuals, whose love the apostle does not fail to record. In his allusion there is certainly the grace which counted on the mention refreshing the Corinthian assembly as it had refreshed himself, but not without a hint that they had lost an opportunity which the three discerned and used before the Lord.

"The assemblies of Asia salute you. Aquila and Prisca5 salute you much in the Lord, with the assembly in their house. All the brethren salute you. Salute one another with a holy kiss. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand. If any one loveth not the Lord [Jesus Christ,]6. let him be anathema maranatha (a curse: the Lord cometh.) The grace of the Lord Jesus [Christ] [be] with you. My love [be] with you all in Christ Jesus. [Amen].” (Vers. 19-24)

The salutation from “the assemblies of Asia” falls in with the fact that the apostle was writing from the capital of that pro-consular province. But it seems to me a mistake to conceive that the name of the church or assembly is applied to a single family in the next clause. The truth really is that this godly pair appear to have opened their house habitually for the saints to assemble there wherever they might reside, whether in Ephesus or in Rome. Thus it was in those early days, when true unity prevailed and vast buildings for accommodating multitudes did not yet exist among Christians. So in Jerusalem, from the first they used to break bread . That Aquila and his wife should greet the Corinthian saints “much in the Lord,” as distinguished from the more general salutation, “all the brethren,” or of the Asiatic assemblies, is easily understood from their personal acquaintance with the Achaian capital. But the mode of salutation enjoined here, as on the Romans, and by the apostle Peter on the Christian Jews scattered throughout Asia Minor, points to the ardent, but holy, affection which then knit together the saints as such: so should it ever, be in a world where sin brings in distance or corruption.

The apostle, then, appends his salutation with his own hand; for here, as usually, the body of the epistle was not in his autograph. But he also adds the sternest denunciation of any one who loved not the Lord, under a seemingly familiar Syrian formula. Calvin ridicules the idea of writing so to Greeks in that tongue; but, explain it as you may, such is the fact, which, does not seem mitigated by his own suggestion that it was a customary form of expressing excommunication among the Hebrews. To me it appears to go farther still: yet did it not in the least clash with the love which animated and filled his heart, as one sees from verse 28, and especially 24. It is to be doubted indeed whether love can be unfeigned without abhorring evil; and what evil can compare with bearing the name of the Lord without real attachment to Him?

Thus the first epistle to the Corinthians ends with a denunciation similar in solemnity to that with which the epistle to the Galatians opens. There the apostle in his seal for the truth of the gospel imprecates a curse on himself, or an angel from heaven, or any one preaching aught besides what he had preached and they received; here he burns with no less vehemence against any one loving not the Lord, and in the light of His coming too, which goes beyond excommunication. But this in no way interferes with his prayer, that not His judgment but His grace might be with you, as he assures them all of his own love in Christ Jesus. Thus confidence and affection mark this autograph conclusion as well as the gravest warning, the wise and worthy personal message to his beloved children in the faith.

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Another and a very different topic claimed the service of the apostle, because it fell under the Lord's care for the church. It might seem wholly a matter for the saints; but experience itself proves how much they need in it the guidance of the Spirit through the written word. Hence pretension to superior spirituality here, as elsewhere, sinks below the dictates of love, and the dictates of every sound mind. How blessed to have the regulating wisdom of God, who deigns to give us His mind even for the smallest things of this life!

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the assemblies of Galatia, so do ye also. Every first of a week let each of you put by him, storing up whatever he may be prospered in, that there. be no collections when I come. And when I am arrived, whomsoever ye shall approve, them I will send with letters, to carry your bounty unto Jerusalem; and if it be suitable that I go, they shall go with me.” (Vers. 1-4.)

It is untrue that the assemblies were left without apostolic regulation, or that they were regulated differently. The snares and the circumstances of Galatia were as unlike those of Corinth as could be conceived; the directions given by the apostle were the same, and this, not merely on matters of the most momentous significance, as sound doctrine, and holy discipline, and the attesting institutions of Christ, so that the worship and public ways of the saints might present the same testimony everywhere, but here, as we see, even in the exercise of their liberality.

One cannot overlook the frequent remembrance of the poor saints at Jerusalem; and no doubt there were circumstances which gave them a special claim. Doubtless external distress prevailed, and persecution had left some widows and orphans. Not only were the believers very numerous there, but there only, so far as we read, had they sold their possessions and substance, so as to distribute to all, as any one had need there; only not one said that anything of what he possessed was his own, but all things were common to them, so that none was in want. But there, partly through this surprising testimony of unselfish love, poverty prevailed later; and none among the Gentile assemblies was so urgent as our apostle that relief should be sent for the brethren in Judea, not merely during the great famine under Claudius Caesar, but thenceforward, as we may gather from 1 and 2 Corinthians, as well as Romans. (Cf. Gal. 2:10; Acts 24:17)

Still, a general principle and practice we find laid down of the highest value for any time. The collection for the saints was bound up with the solemn and gracious associations of the first, or resurrection, day. It was to proceed regularly, not occasionally; it was to be done with conscience, according as we might be prospered, not under influence, or pressure, or haste, still less with indifference, or on mere human grounds. Thus faith and love would be called out, and healthfully applied, while waiting for the coming of the Lord. It seems that each was to lay aside at home what he judged according to the means given; but the mention of the first of the week, or Lord's day, points to their joining

their contribution, when they came together, as every disciple did, to break bread. This is truly to lay up treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupteth, and where thieves do not dig through or steal.

Again, the apostle was careful to leave no room for evil surmise or appearance; and so he here indicates a fresh application of the apostolic wisdom which we see in Acts 6 The multitude chose their own administrators. They contributed the funds, and they, not the apostles, chose men in whom they had confidence to dispense them. (See also 2 Cor. 8) As the church cannot impart a spiritual power, so the Lord alone gave gifts for the ministry or service of souls. (Rom. 10; 12:1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4) The apostles, personally or by delegate (as Titus), chose elders, being the chiefs of that authority of which the presbyters were the ordinary representatives locally. (Acts 14; Titus 2) Everything in the church rests on its own proper ground. Here, then, the apostle promises on his arrival to send with letters whomsoever they should approve to bring their bounty unto Jerusalem.

But the letters were to be his, not theirs as the Authorized Version says, following the mistake of the Vulgate, Erasmus, Calvin, Beza, and the Text. Rec., which punctuates wrongly in consequence. For what would be the sense of their approving by their letters when the apostle came? The Corinthians really were to select whom they approved, and Paul, on arriving, would send them on, furnished with letters from himself. So too the Greek commentators understood.

It is common to make the genitive dependent on , “meet,” and to deduce the meaning, “if the occasion, or magnitude of the collection, warrant an apostolic mission in order to carry it.” But such a sense, though grammatically possible, seems to me unworthy, not only of the apostle, but even of the delegates, and only tolerable because men have been lowered by the mendicant habits of Christendom. The truth is that the genitive of design, purpose, or the conclusion to be formed, as here, is a common Hellenistic usage, not infrequent in classical authors. The Authorized Version is therefore nearer the mark, and much more in unison with the dignity of all concerned, as well as with God's word and Spirit, which, while cherishing the largest self-denial and generosity, are wont to slight the resources of unbelief, and to brand covetousness as idolatry. If it were suitable, then, that Paul also should go, the delegates should go with him. He would guard his services from all ground for reproach, providing for things honest, not only before the Lord, but also before men.

"But I will come unto you when I shall have gone through Macedonia, for I go through Macedonia. But perhaps I shall stay, or even winter, with you, that ye may send me forward wherever I may go. For I do not wish to see you now in passing; for I 1hope to remain some time with you, if the Lord permit. But I will remain at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effectual door is open to me, and [there are] many adversaries. But if Timotheus come, see that he be with you without fear, for he worketh the Lord's work, even as I. Let none then despise him, but send him forward in peace, that he may come unto me, for I am awaiting him with the brethren. But concerning the brother Apollos, I besought him much to come unto you with the brethren; but it was not at all [his] will to come now, but he will come when he shall have good opportunity.” (Vers. 5-12.)

It is evident from verse 8 that the apostle was in Ephesus when he wrote to Corinth this first epistle. The spurious postscript in the common text, followed in the Authorized Version, says “from Philippi,” but it was really from Ephesus, as in the Vatican and some other copies; and therefore salutations are given from “the assemblies of Asia.” (Ver. 19.) His purpose was to pass through Macedonia: this is the force of M. , a journey then before him as a settled thing, but not actually in progress. He might, perhaps, then stay, or even winter, with them, adding an expression of loving confidence that they might send him on wherever he might go. For he declined seeing them then, for reasons explained in 2 Cor. 1, hoping to remain some time with them, under the Lord's permission, instead of merely passing through. He should remain at Ephesus, where he then was, till Pentecost. That the Lord was there working was a sufficient reason, and none the less because there were adversaries many. He trusted to carry on the work, and help souls against Satan.

But his heart could not rest without commending Timothy, and the more as he was timid. He would have him be without fear in their midst, and deigns to put him as a workman of the Lord so far on common ground with himself. He is anxious that none should despise him—a danger among the saints, who are as open to be deceived by self-seeking men, as to slight true servants of Christ.

The case of Apollos is also instructive in more ways than one. Paul besought him to go to Corinth, rising above all feeling that not a few set him above himself; Apollos would not then go, it would seem, out of similar delicacy, unwilling to give occasion to such folly and wrong among the saints as they then were. We see how the Lord maintains freedom, as well as calls out grace, among His laborers, even when apostles wore there, recording it for our guidance when there are none. Nothing, in its way, can be happier than this picture of unjealous love and respect, but free as before the Lord, among servants so varied as an apostle, his young companion, and a comparatively independent laborer like Apollos.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, Notes on

Thus the dying man and the Man of resurrection power stand in full contrast, as do those who are respectively theirs, with the glorious issue for such as once, the first man's, like others, became by grace of the Second, the last Adam. Adam became a sinner, and was sentenced to death before he became head of the family. Christ bore sin, and died to it, before He became Head of those who believed. Till He died He abode alone; after it He had much fruit. And as there never was a hope for man in another, so none other can rival Him. He is the last Adam, no less than the second Man. He who will finally pretend to it, ere the age ends, will secure the worship of what was once Christendom, as well as (strange to say) of the Jew, is only the man of sin, though sitting down in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. He is emphatically from beneath, as the Lord is from heaven, and they that follow him perish everlastingly, while the believer has life eternal in Christ, and shall be glorified with Him.

But we have more. “Now1 this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit God's kingdom, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,2 in an instant, in [the] twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for it shall sound, and the dead shall live incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruptibility, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the word that is written, Death was swallowed up in victory. Where, death, [is] thy victory?3 where, death,4 thy sting? Now the sting of death [is] sin, and the power of sin the law; but thanks to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, my

brethren beloved, be firm, immovable, abounding in the work of the Lord always, knowing that your toil is not vain in [the] Lord.” (Vers. 50-58.)

It will be observed that God's kingdom is here viewed exclusively on the other side of death, in accordance with the great theme in hand. “Earthly things” have, their place very definitely elsewhere; here, for the reason given, they are not found. Flesh and blood, man, as he is here below, cannot inherit God's kingdom. It is not merely that corruption does not inherit incorruption, being incompatible, but man in his best estate is altogether vanity. Short of resurrection, which is the intervention of another Man, who is also God, he cannot inherit whore God reigns. But in Christ we see the power which withdraws the believer completely from death, impossible without His death, not because He could not intrinsically quicken for evermore, but because the believer had been a sinner like others, and could not otherwise be saved consistently with God's righteousness, holiness, truth, and glory.

His victory extends even to the living saints, not merely to keep them alive in the world, but to change them at His coming, without undergoing the humiliation of death in any shape. This is no doubt a truth unknown to Old Testament times, and the revelation there given; it is a secret made known now. “Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for it shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” The earlier communication was not a mystery; this is. Old Testament saints (witness Job) knew certainly the resurrection, not only of man in general (chap. 14), but of the saint in particular (chap. xix.). But who could tell or think of saints being changed without going through death in virtue of the perfect victory of grace in Christ? It was reserved for the days of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, when the infinite work was done whereby souls, once guilty, could be brought into the efficacy and the knowledge of redemption. And what a proof of its efficacy, when the saints that remain alive are changed without dying, or still less any purgatorial process after death, and this, not in some specially known for practical holiness, but in all the saints then waiting for Christ here below!

Here man breaks down utterly. He revolts from what makes nothing of his power or his merits, yea, what exposes his total inability, and demonstrates his ruin through sin, while it reveals the free and full and triumphant grace which saves—saves the body as well as soul of the Christian, through Christ, to God's glory. Even saints, themselves owing all to it, find it often so beyond their thoughts, that they are apt to curtail its extent, to obscure its clearness, and to fritter away its power.

A notable evidence of this appears in the singular vacillation here found in the ancient copies and versions. There is no need, perhaps no ground, for accusing any of the lack of good faith; but if not, it is hard to account for the departure from the words and truth given by the Spirit, save by the strangeness of it for those who copied or translated.

Thus the Latins followed the reading extant in the first hand of the Clermont manuscript, but corrected there later, , , omnes quidem resurgemus, sed non omnes immutabimur, “we shall indeed all rise again, but we shall not all be changed,” a double error, directly opposed in each part to positive scripture. Indeed the dead saints shall rise, but all saints are not to die, nay, none found alive and remaining unto the coming of the Lord, when the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living that remain, shall be caught up together with them in clouds to meet the Lord in the air. It is appointed unto men, doubtless, once to die; but saints stand on another ground—of the second Man, not of the first; and such as live till He come look to be not unclothed but clothed upon, that mortality be swallowed up of life, instead of dying and rising again like the rest. Thus those who teach that we shall all rise imply the universal dying of the saints, and in effect deny the power of life in Christ, which it is the great aim of the Spirit to press in 2 Cor. 5. But they teach still more erroneously that “we shall not all be changed” in no less open contrariety to the invariable declaration of scripture, and the necessary exigencies of that glory of God in hope of which we rejoice.

For we look for the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven as Savior, who shall change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory. In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. The earthly house of the tabernacle we have now is wholly unmeet for the glory of God: we need therefore a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, which we shall have at Christ's coming. Consequently we must, and shall, be changed then and there. Hence the second clause of the Latin is as false as the first. They together ignore grace and glory in their full character and final issues. Accordingly, without a particle of prejudice against the Vulgate, one may say that it would be difficult to match such a departure from the true text and the truth in general in the worst version that ever was made. Yet human tradition dooms its votaries to the sanction, as authentic scripture, of these gross and grievous errors throughout half Christendom.

But the text of Lachmann the critic, founded on A C F G, and other authorities, is as bad, if not worse, . [.] , . . For here we are taught in no sense the power of life, but of death, in the very chapter which develops resurrection of and in Christ, and in the part of it, above all others, which discloses the secret of victory by and with Christ when He comes for His own then alive on earth. A singular mystery indeed that “we shall all die or sleep;” seeing that this is the common lot of the race, and in no way the disclosure of the exemption which grace will confer when the Lord Jesus will come and gather us to Himself. We need say no more of the further error which denies the change, after the pattern of Christ's glorification, to any that are His. Rationalism shares this latter with Romanism; and though they differ as to the former point, the one affirming that “we shall all sleep,” the other that “we shall all rise,” they agree in adopting mistaken readings, which deny the special grace of Christ to His own who are to be found awaiting His descent from heaven, and the special mystery here added to complete the general truth of the chapter.

This is entirely confirmed by the context (ver. 52), which besides furnishes somewhat more to the believer. We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. The glorification of the saints will be effected, immense as it is in itself, and from every spot of the globe, sooner than the mind can reckon, or the eye discern, when the final summons is given to the heavenly host to quit its halting-place. The allusion is to the signal last given on the breaking up of a camp, at that time too familiar a figure to escape the nations of Europe, and far beyond it, which had been welded into the empire of Rome. “For it shall sound,” however little man may expect it, “and the dead shall rise incorruptible, and we shall he changed;” not, remark, we shall rise then, nor they only, but “we” too shall be changed, in exact accordance with the true and common text of verse 51, and in opposition to the changes of both rationalists and Romanists.

But we have more explanation, and a scripture rich in its connection of truth, cited from the Old Testament. “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal put on immortality.” (Ver. 53.) The apostle expresses the truth with perfect precision. He does not speak of those corrupting in the grave, nor even of the dead or dying, but of what is “corruptible” and “mortal,” so as to take in the body even whilst we are alive, and thus be an object for the change, if not for resurrection. “But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal

shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the word that is written, Death was swallowed up in victory." (Ver. 54.) The epoch of the change is the coming of the Lord from heaven. When the dead in Christ shall rise, and we who are alive be changed and caught up, then shall Isa. 25:8 come to pass. But it is evident from the prophet that this must be at the end of the age, not of the world; that then the earth's blessing begins, instead of passing away, and that then Jehovah will destroy in this mountain [Zion] the face of the covering cast over all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord Jehovah will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth; for the mouth of Jehovah hath spoken it..... In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah, We have a strong city, &c. It is the kingdom come in power and glory, instead of the end of it for eternity; and the risen or changed saints will share it, as well as eternity, with Christ. "Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?" It is to be feared that many Christians know it less now than the carnal Corinthians of old. Yet it is less excusable for those who have the apostolic correction to profit by.

No wonder that the apostle refers to the challenge of another prophet. "Death, where [is] thy victory? Death, where [is] thy sting?" (Hos. 13:14) with the comment, "Now the sting of death [is] sin, and the strength of sin the law; but thanks to God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Vers. 55-57.) What a triumphant answer is the resurrection and the change of the saints at the coming of the Lord! It is sin which gives not only occasion, but its sting, to death; and the law, however righteous, could work no deliverance for the guilty, but proves in effect the strength of sin, by provoking its rebellious will so much the more against the commands of God. His grace, not the law, is the strength of holiness, as we learn from Rom. 6:14; and therefore does the apostle here break forth into thanksgiving as he sees God giving us the victory so completely and forever, through our Lord Jesus Christ. "Wherefore, my brethren beloved, be ye steadfast, immovable, abounding in the work of the Lord always, knowing that your toil is not vain in [the] Lord." (Ver. 58.) Christ's resurrection is the pledge of ours, the witness of salvation, the pattern of deliverance, and the spring of hope in the midst of labor as well as suffering for Christ.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, Notes on

The apostle next turns from warning to meet objections in the shape of questions physical, as our Lord met the social difficulty raised by the Sadducees. These he quickly exposes in their true character. They are folly; or he rather is a fool who employs his avowed ignorance to reject the testimony of God, who alone knows. Our wisdom is to know the scriptures, and so His mind, without a question of His power to give them effect.

"But some one will say, How are the dead raised? and with what body do they come? Fool, what thou sowest is not quickened unless it die; and what thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may be of wheat, or of some one of the rest; and God giveth to it a body as he pleased, and to each of the seeds its own body." (Vers. 35-38.) Thus severely is the inquisitive mind of man rebuked, and especially so in this instance, where the clear revelation of God is doubted or denied, because the process, the how, of the resurrection may not be understood, or the character of the risen body. It will be found, however, that God does not withhold the weightiest information; but the apostle here administers a reproof which would be deeply felt by those who piqued themselves on their wisdom, yet were foolish enough to overlook the analogies of nature before their eyes, which refute the assumed likeness between the body as it is, and as it shall be. "Fool, what thou" (not God merely, but the feeble objector) "sowest is not quickened unless it die." Death, therefore, was no barrier to the resurrection, of course not its cause, but its antecedent. There may be change, as shown afterward, but no resurrection unless death be first. There is dissolution in death, but not annihilation. There is disorganization in death previous to another mode of being. But the seed dies as such in order to pass into a plant; and so he adds, "and what thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but bare grain it may be of wheat or of some of the rest, and God giveth it a body as he pleased, and to each of the seeds its own body."

What springs up differs widely from what was sown, yet each seed issues in its own plant. There is such a thing as species, and this fixed from the first, as God pleased. "Natural selection" is not only contrary to fact but senseless, yet none the less the idol of modern materialists, as Ashtoreth was of the Sidonians and Molech of the Amorites. No doubt there is a germ or principle of life; but what does the objector know of it? If he is utterly unacquainted with this even in the seed, is he in a position to cavil as to the body? One may reason fairly from known truth, not from ignorance. If one rejects whatever is not understood, where is such unconscionable doubt to end? Not only is all spiritual being swept away, but one must begin with denying the existence of oneself and every other being. Nothing is less rational than to make reason the only inlet of thought, feeling, knowledge, conscience, or consciousness.

"Every flesh [is] not the same flesh, but one [is] of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fishes. [There are] both bodies heavenly and bodies earthly; but different is the glory of the heavenly, and different that of the earthly: one [the] sun's glory, and another [the] moon's glory, and another [the] stars' glory; for star differs from star in glory. So also [is] the resurrection of the dead." (Vers. 39-42.) The apostle shows how vain is the assumption of a condition for the body in resurrection similar to the present state, from the diversity even of flesh in the animal world that now is. There is no monotony in God's creation. The flesh is palpably different in men, cattle or quadrupeds, birds, fishes: how unreasonable then, if that ground be sought, to take for granted that the body must be at all like what it is now in a condition so distinct as resurrection! Far more sensibly might one conceive the most striking difference. It is no question, however, either of reason or of imagination, but of faith as far as God has revealed. But there is a farther illustration, which the apostle draws even from sight, to set aside empiricism, petty and groveling, as it always is.

"There are both bodies heavenly and bodies earthly," and the glory of the one differs from that of the other; and not only this, but the heavenly ones, sun, moon, stars, vary from each other, as do those below. There is no need to suppose angels are meant, like Alford, de Wette, and Meyer; and to introduce saints here as do Chrysostom and his followers, is to confound the things compared. The objection to understanding "heavenly bodies" of the sun, &c., as if too modern a term, is simply want of knowledge; it is mere captiousness to boot that, if we apply these words thus, we must suppose the apostle to have imagined the stars to be endowed with bodies in the literal sense; for similar language occurs in the Hellenistic Greek of Galen (iv. 358,359, ed. Kuhn), who lived not long after the apostle, as was pointed out by Wetstein, ii. 171, more than a hundred years ago. Yet the object is not to prove different degrees of glory in heaven, as thought by many ancients and moderns, but rather to contrast the risen with the natural state. "So also is the resurrection of the dead." This is made plain from what follows. They are quite wrong who make the glory to be exclusively heavenly or earthly. Both will be found in the kingdom of God. (See John 3:12.)

“It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body: if1 there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual.” (Vers. 42-44)

This is one among the scriptures where the present is used, not as an actual or continuous thing, but abstractly: a sense constantly forgotten by grammarians as well as expositors. Yet is it inexcusable ignorance, for the same principle applies to almost, if not all, languages, and seems to flow from the nature of language, the present being most suitable for an abstract, as distinguished from its historical, usage. Here it is impossible rightly to take it otherwise. Resurrection, and even burial, or sowing, as it is here figuratively called (and not the origin of our natural being, as Archbishop Whately understood), excludes a merely actual or a continuing fact. It is the statement of a truth.

The body of the believer is sown in dishonor, corruption, and weakness; so all see; what do we believe? It is raised in incorruption, glory, and power—not a mere ethereal or airy body, as Chrysostom and Origen respectively said, but a body instinct with spirit life, as once with animal life from the soul, yet not a spirit, but a spiritual body, not limited by earthly conditions, but capable either of passing through a closed door, or of being felt, able to take food, though needing none, if we may judge from Him who, risen as the great Head, and pattern and power, declared that a spirit has not flesh and bones, as they saw He had.

The suitability of this for heaven is apparent. “If there is a natural or soulish body, there is also a spiritual.” As surely as there is the body which we have now, suited to the earth and the life that now is, there is also a spiritual body, which we shall have when the Lord Christ comes to raise those that are His. (See Vers. 20-23.) God, who constituted the one for the sphere of responsibility and trial, will certainly adapt the other to the conditions of glory, where the eternal life which is now exercised in scenes of sorrow, itself in faith, hope, and love, will then enjoy the unclouded rest of God on high. The , omitted by most of the later uncials and cursives, and even the Syrr. vv. as well as the Greek fathers, is attested by the most ancient and beat manuscripts, uncial or cursive, the rest of the old versions, and the Latin fathers: only some, by , have left out the entire latter half of verse 44.

Now the apostle comes to the decisive proof of scripture, and the personal test of Christ. “So also it is written, The first man Adam became a living soul; the last Adam a quickening Spirit: yet not first [is] the spiritual, but the natural, afterward the spiritual; the first man out of earth made of dust, the second man2 out of heaven: such as he made of dust, such also those made of dust; and such as the heavenly [one], such also the heavenly [ones]; and even as we bore the image of the [one] made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly [ones].” (Vers. 45-49.) It is the way of the apostle, and indeed of the inspired in general, to trace up all to the sources; and so it is here at the end, as at the earlier part, of this discussion. Adam and Christ are before us, the first man Adam made only a living soul, the last Adam a life-giving spirit. Thus, as usual, first is seen man failing in his responsibility, then the obedient, suffering, victorious Man.

It is to be noticed too that the great occasion when scripture shows us the Lord become a quickening Spirit was when He rose from the dead. Then, not before, did He breathe on the disciples, and say, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. It was not the new birth merely, but life more abundantly, because in the power of resurrection; and this quite falls in with the doctrine of the chapter, which looks neither at incarnation nor at ascension, however important, nor here at His death, though this be sacrificially and in moral power the foundation of all for us as well as for God's glory.

Such was the order, and this the triumph, not yet in our resurrection, but on His who will raise the sleeping saints at His coming. It is not that Adam had not an immortal soul, or that Christ could not lay His life down; but the one at the beginning became a living soul, the other, after having been manifested in the end of the ages for putting away of sin by His sacrifice, a life-giving Spirit as risen. “Out of heaven” is no more inconsistent with this, than “out of earth” with Adam's being made a living soul, but each, on the contrary, most suitable.

And now we can go a step farther in each case. Such as was the dusty one (Adam), such also the dusty ones (the race); and such as the heavenly One, such also the heavenly ones (Christians); and just as we bore the image of the dusty one, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly One. We were, and are, naturally the family of the first man, and bore his image (cf. Gen. 5:8); we, as now in Christ, shall also bear the image of Christ in the day that is coming. God has predestined us to be conformed to the imago of His Son, that He should be first-born among many brethren. It is not a question of any transforming us meanwhile according to the same image by the Spirit, which is true and momentous day by day; it is that full and final conformity which cannot be till Christ consummates salvation, and transforms our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory, according to the working of His ability even to subdue all things to Himself.

If we go alone by manuscripts, &c., we should have here , “let us bear,” seeing that the great majority of the best authorities is in its favor, not (it is true) the Vatican, and a few cursives with some versions and fathers, while others lay the express emphasis on the hortative form. The context is decisively in favor of the fut. ind. How then is the erratum to be accounted for? By two considerations: first, the proneness, even of the best copies, to confound and , secondly, the readiness of pious men, who feebly know grace, to turn a promise into an exhortation. The rationalist naturally prefers a reading which puts forward man, so as to hide the glorious power of God in raising the dead into the likeness of the risen Christ.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:29-34, Notes on

The apostle now resumes the reasoning interrupted by the great parenthesis of divine revelation in verses 20-28. Therein he had traced out the consequences of Christ's resurrection, and its connection with the kingdom to the end, when God shall be all in all. And the simple apprehension of the unquestionable fact that he does take up again the thread laid down at verse 19 is of all moment in helping us to understand the true bearing of verse 29, which has been singularly misapplied by all who fail to see this reference. It had been shown that the denial of the resurrection affects alike the dead and the living saints. If Christ be not raised, not merely did those that fell asleep in Him perish, but if in this life only we have had hope in Christ, we are more to be pitied than all men. This directly in sense connects itself with the disputed clause.

"Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead? If no dead rise at all, why also are they baptized for them?1. Why are we also in danger every hour?” (Vers. 29, 30.) There is no need of departing from the ordinary meaning of “baptized,” “for,” or “dead.” Still less is it admissible that the Corinthians or others, in that early day, had devised a new and superstitious application of baptism, either for

catechumens about to die, or for relatives already departed, who had not been baptized. It is incredible that the apostle should have contented himself with so passing a notice of such a nefarious imposture, though Dean Stanley assumes its truth, and characteristically draws from it a testimony to the apostle's charitable dealing with a practice for which he could have had no real sympathy. Calvin justly explodes the notion of any such allusion here. It is probable, however, that though with Estius, &c., he is wrong in thinking “the dead” mean those about to die, such a misinterpretation of the language may have suggested the rite later to the excitable and perverted minds of the Syrian Marcionites, or other heretics, of whose practice we hear in the writings of Tertullian, Epiphanius, &c.

Neander's mind revolts from the idea, of such a baptism, yet he so far yields to the reasoning of Ruckert as to allow that it seems the most natural interpretation. (Hist, of the Pl. and Tr. of the Christian Church, i. 164, ii. 117, ed. Bohn.) He suggests the raging of an epidemic about that time in Corinth, which may have swept away believers before baptism, whose relatives were baptized in their stead; but he pleads that, if Paul might for the occasion have borrowed an argument from the conviction lying at the basis of such a custom, he would probably have taken care to explain himself at another opportunity against this custom itself, as he did in reference to females speaking in their public assemblies.

There is not the smallest foundation for any hypothesis of the sort. The context suggests the true substitutionary idea. That allows of some such shade of thought is certain, not only from its usage in all correct Greek, but especially from the New Testament, where the physical sense of “over,"2 so common elsewhere, does not occur. Thus we find the apostle in Philemon 13, which is distinct. (Compare John 11:50-52; 18:14; Rom. 5:6, 7, 8; 2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 20; 1 Thess. 5:10; 1 Tim. 2:6; 1 Peter 2:21; 3:18, &c.) Nor is this found in the inspired writers only. Vigor has cited a decisive passage from Dion. Hal. (Ant. Rom. viii. 87, ed. Reiske, p. 1723): , , .

The apostle then refers to those who had already slept in Christ, as well as the living trials of such as himself. What will become of those baptized for the dead? Why then be enlisted into such ranks, if no dead at all are raised? Why do we too incur danger every hour? It was a forlorn hope indeed, if the light of resurrection did not shine. There is no strange practice supposed, but a forcible association of and now baptized with those who had gone before; still less is there a reprehension, express or tacit, which it is only possible to conceive by indulging in the imagination. Had it been , there might have been some trifling show of argument for an exceptional fact or class, but much more naturally suits the baptized in general, the objects of that action. To infer that the present participle, rather than the aorist, implies a practice not generally prevalent, is as illegitimate grammatically, as it is exegetically to conceive a practice not otherwise known to us. There is not the least ground to gather from the text that it existed then, or was here alluded to. There is no reason, therefore, for translating the phrase, “on behalf of the dead.” Indeed it seems to me that, were there a reference to friends, believing or not, who had died without baptism, a much more definite and restricted formula would be imperatively called for than , which very naturally refers to those in verse 18, as present danger does to verse 19. This also accounts for the change from the third to the first person; so strict is the analogy, without the strange fancy that by the third person, and by the article before ., the apostle indirectly separates himself and those to whom he is writing from participation, in, or approval of, the practice.

I do not contend for, nor agree with, the views of the Greek fathers; but it is to be noticed that not one of them, as far as I am aware, saw any such reference, as Ambrose, Anselm, Erasmus, Grotius, &c., followed by Ruckert, Meyer, De Wette, Alford, &c.; still less states it as “the only legitimate reference,” which is indeed not only unfounded but presumptuous, if not to the last degree puerile. Nor do I understand what Mr. T. S. Green means by “baptized concerning the dead,” as he translates in his “Twofold New Testament.” In his “New Testament Grammar” of 1842, page 251, he cites Rom. 1:4, and 1 Cor. 15:29, as Bur posed instances where by only one person, namely, Christ, is really signified; but this is in both a mistake. C. F. Matthaei falls into the opposite error of supposing that, baptism being typical of resurrection, .=, comparing Matt. 8:22 and similar passages. This resembles Chrysostom, Theodoret, Tertullian, &c., who taught that “for the dead” meant for our bodies. None of them saw the train of thought.

But G. B. Winer seems at least as uncertain as any in his Grammar of New Testament Greek (Moulton's edition). First, he tells us (page 219) that [can hardly refer to (the dead) Christ—in that case we should have had —but must be understood of (unbaptized) dead men. There is no such necessity, as we have seen. But, letting this pass, in page 849 we are told that the text is probably to be rendered, “who allow themselves to be baptized over the dead,” whereas, when formally treating of the prepositions, he admits that the meaning of in the New Testament is always figurative, the nearest approach to its local signification being 1 Cor. 4:6, unless we so render our text. In the same page (478) he gives “for the benefit of, for,” as probably meant in 1 Cor. 15:29. But he does not close the paragraph without admitting that, as in most cases he who acts in behalf of another appears for him, , sometimes borders on , “instead of,” and cites, besides Eurip. Alc. 700 and Philem. 1:18, Thuc. i. 141 and Polyb. iii. 67. 7. This last evidently sustains the real unforced sense of our text, which is as consonant with the context and argument, as it avoids the need of doing harshness to exegesis, grammar, early doctrine, or history.

It is the resurrection (and all is based on that of Christ) which, as it is the basis of Christianity, so also animates with a calm and constant courage more than human. Here the apostle turns to his own experience, the more vividly and solemnly to impress the saints addressed: “Daily I die, by the boasting of you, brethren,3 which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord. If after man I fought with beasts in Ephesus, what [is] the profit to me? If no dead rise, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die. Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners. Wake up righteously, and sin not; for some are ignorant of God: I speak unto your shame.” (Vers. 31-34.)

The Corinthian saints were his boast and joy, whatever their faults, which no one had such reason to feel as the apostle; but he had it in Christ Jesus, which gave it force and permanence. Thus does he protest his dying day by day. It is not a doctrinal standing; there he could say, I died. Death with Christ is a fact, for faith never a mere and slow process going on, as mystics dream. Here it is a constant exposure to physical death. So he served the Lord, and boasted in His saints: how absurd if there be no resurrection! But it was not only joy in the saints spite of daily dying; what a spring for endurance in the world outside! “If after man I fought with beasts in Ephesus, what [is] the profit to me?” Faith is not fanatical; it reasons as soundly as it feels loyally and works by love.

Here again it was resurrection which cheered him in the fierce conflict, which, speaking as men do, he calls a fight with beasts. It is no uncommon figure. Compare Titus 1:12 Tim. 4:17; and so, it seems, Heraclitus designated the Ephesians see also Appian, Bell. C. ii. 763, and Ignat. ad Rom. 5. To me also with some ancients and moderns, seems meant to qualify the phrase, so that it should not be taken literally.

To abandon resurrection then is to yield ourselves up to ease, pleasure, and indulgence. It is not the immortality of the soul, but the faith of resurrection, which keeps man from sinking to and below a brute. Men may cry up the soul, without a thought of God, and only to

self-exaltation; but the resurrection brings in the reality of God's intervention with men, either in salvation or in judgment. And these human thoughts, which looked plausible and even spiritual, had deceived some of the saints in Corinth. Is it not more purifying to think of the soul apart from the body, and in heavenly glory? Not so; it is the hope of the body rising which encourages us to deny self, and mortify our members here below. See the place given to the body in Rom. 6; 12, as well as in the Epistles to the Corinthians, and elsewhere. Now is the time, here the place, to walk as dead with Christ, and alive in Him to God. In glory we shall dwell at ease, our bodies changed into the likeness of His glorious body.

The word of God maintains this life of unselfish faith and readiness to suffer, not the communications of men, as themselves confess. These puff up and corrupt: so say Euripides, Menander, and common proverbs. Hence the call to wake up righteously, or to righteousness, and not to be sinning. To deny the resurrection is to display ignorance of God. (See Matt. 22:29.) This was not wonderful in a heathen; but what a disgrace to the saints that some among them should be thus ignorant! So ends boastful knowledge. The Corinthians must begin again, and, starting from a dead and risen Christ, use the truth of God to judge the thoughts of men. He loves to be known as the God that raises the dead; while it is also true that all live unto Him.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28, Notes on

The apostle, having thus brought to a climax of absurdity the consequences that flow from the assumption that no dead rise, turns next to the facts of revelation, and triumphantly displays their blessedness in Christ, as contrasted with the first head of the race.

“But now hath Christ been raised from [the] dead, firstfruits of those fallen asleep. For since by man1 [is] death, by man also resurrection of dead. For as in the Adam all die, so also in the Christ shall all be made alive; but each in his own rank; [the] firstfruits Christ; then those that are the2 Christ's at his coming; then the end, when he giveth up3 the kingdom to him [who is] God and Father, when he shall have annulled all rule, and all authority, and power. For he must reign until4 he put all the enemies under his feet. Death, last enemy, is annulled. For he subjected all things under his feet. But when he saith that all things have been subjected, [it is] manifest that [it is] except him who subjected all things to him. But when all things shall have been subjected to him, then also the Son himself will be subjected to him that subjected all things to him, that God may be all in all.” (Vers. 20-28)

Thus the fact is that Christ is raised from the dead, not merely first, but “first-fruits of those fallen asleep.” It is uncalled for, therefore, to reason more on the disastrous results of non-resurrection. For not only is a dead man risen, but that dead Christ, the conqueror of Satan, not only for this life in the wilderness, but from the grave for eternity. He is risen, so that death has no more dominion over Him; He is risen, the pledge that those fallen asleep shall consequently rise. It is the proof that all men shall live, unjust no less than just; but here He is viewed, not in His power to raise His enemies for judgment, but as the blessed spring of the resurrection of His own, firstfruits of those fallen asleep. Consequently He is said to be, as He was, raised from out of () dead men, as His saints will be at His coming or presence. In either case it is not only , but (that is, resurrection of, but from among dead men,), because in both cases other dead remain in their graves; whereas the resurrection of the unjust will be only , and not .

Such is the simple statement of the truth as to this, which is sometimes missed through ignorance, if not prejudice. It is in vain to argue that the resurrection of the saints is called a resurrection of the dead. Of course it is, as the resurrection of the unjust might be also. But the decisive point of difference is, that only the resurrection of Christ or of His own, who are raised without disturbing the wicked as yet from their graves, could be designated a resurrection from, or from out of, the dead, because the rest of the dead await His voice to wake them up to stand before the great white throne, and be judged according to their works. There are two distinct ants, or rather characters, of resurrection, according to our Lord, in John 5 (and so in Rev. 20); never, therefore, such a notion as one universal or indiscriminate rising of all, good and bad, at the same moment, as tradition supposes, with an effort at proof from Dan. 12 (which predicts the revival of Israel on earth), and Matt. 25 (which treats of all the Gentiles, or the nations which the Son of man will judge when He sits on the throne of His glory here below), neither scripture speaking of resurrection in the true and literal sense.

But more: we are shown the connection of resurrection, as of death, with man. If the weak and fallen Adam brought in the one, the glorious last Adam will bring in the other, Himself already the firstfruits. “For since by man [is] death, by man also the resurrection of dead. For as in the Adam all die; even so in the Christ shall all be made alive.” (Vers. 21, 22.) There are two families, characterized by their respective heads. The Adam family consists of all mankind, and they all die; the Christ family consists of all that are Christ's, and they shall all be made alive, that is, in resurrection. For the question is exclusively of the body, and not of the soul, important as this last may be in its place. What the apostle here demonstrates is, that the bodies of the dead rise, and this in virtue of Christ for all His people, as death is the portion of all Adam's posterity as such. It is impossible to sever “all” in either case from their representative head: only “all” in Adam's case embraces the entire race, whereas “all” in the case of Christ as necessarily attaches to His family alone. And this, as it is certain to the thoughtful believer, so is it made plain to the simplest in verse 23,” But each in his own rank; [the] firstfruits Christ; then those that are the Christ's at his coming.” Then all that are made alive in virtue of the Christ are shown here distinctly to be those that are His, and none else. Are not the wicked, then, to be raised 7 Unquestionably; but so special, is the resurrection here that they are not even named. It is the resurrection of life, and belongs only to those that have practiced good. They are His. For them He has won the victory. To them even now He has given eternal life; and they, if fallen asleep, shall rise at His coming.

"Then the end, when he giveth up the kingdom to him who is God and Father, when he shall have annulled all rule, and all authority, and power.” (Ver. 24.) Here it will be noted that the apostle introduces, not the rising of the wicked dead, but “the end,” when Christ delivers up the kingdom in which He is to come and appear., (Compare Luke 19:12; 23:42 Tim. 4:1) “The end,” being the epoch of the delivery of the kingdom in which He is to judge, must be after all judgment is over, and still more after the rest of the dead were raised in order to be judged. It is in this way, then, that the resurrection of the wicked is not expressed but involved; not in the blessed life-giving resurrection which is for His own, but in that exertion of His power which characterizes His kingdom, when all the enemies are to be put under His feet, the last of those to be annulled being death. The unjust are no longer, even seemingly, under that power of death or Satan, for they must be raised, Satan punished, and death annulled. He must reign and judge the enemies; and theirs is expressly a resurrection of judgment, according to the Lord's express declaration. The believers do not come into judgment, but have life in Him, and will reign with Him then. The risen saints

are associated with Him when He takes the kingdom; the wicked are judged before He gives it up. “The end” here is absolute. It is the close, not merely of the age, as in Matt. 13; 24, and 28, which inaugurates the Son of man's coming to reign, but of that kingdom. It is strictly “the end,” when eternity, in the fullest sense, begins, the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

It will have been seen that the grand point is God's exaltation of the risen Man, the Lord Jesus, in contrast with fallen Adam. And we must carefully distinguish between the words of the two psalms applied to Him: in verse 25 of Psa. 110, and in verse 27 of Psa. 8 God, according to the latter, subjected all things to the Son of man, once humbled, now risen; and this so absolutely takes in the universe as put under Christ, that God alone is excepted. But according to the former the glorified Messiah sits on the throne on high till Jehovah makes Messiah's enemies His footstool. He is waiting until that moment. Then is the rod of Messiah's strength to be sent by Jehovah out of Zion, and He will rule in the midst of his enemies.

Thus the subjection of all things to Him risen is already true to faith, according to the use made of Psalm evil, while at His coming from the right hand of God, His enemies will be made His footstool, and He will rule in their midst. To this last answers the necessity of His reigning till He put all the enemies under His feet, death's annulling included at the last. It is what scripture calls the kingdom, during which the Lord is to reduce all rule, and all authority, and power, and then render it up to Him who is God and Father. (Ver. 24.) This will be at the end of the thousand years' reign, which reign is characterized in verse 25, verse 26 adding what will be at its close. Verse 27 states the universality of His present title, as bound up with His resurrection; as verse 28 the eternal condition, when the universe has been subjected in fact, and the Son Himself shall be also to Him who subjected it all to Him, in order that, not the Father exclusively, but God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) should be all in all, instead of the kingdom of man in Christ exalted and reigning. Thus is the lie of Satan met by the truth, grace, righteousness, and glorious counsels of God: man in Christ governing all first, and finally God all in all, where righteousness needs not to rule, but can dwell in endless blessing and peace.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, Notes on

Having thus shown the immense care with which God had provided witnesses to the resurrection of Christ, as it was preached by the apostles, and believed by all Christians, he now proceeds to reason from it to the resurrection of the dead, and also from their denial of the resurrection to its effect on Christ and the gospel.

"But if Christ is preached that he hath been raised from [the] dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of [the] dead? But if there is no resurrection of [the] dead, neither hath Christ been raised; and if Christ hath not been raised, then also empty [is] our preaching, and empty also your faith; and we are also found false witnesses of God, because we witnessed concerning God that he raised the Christ, whom he raised not, if indeed no dead are raised. For if no dead are raised, neither hath Christ been raised; and if Christ hath not been raised, vain [is] your faith; ye are yet in your sins; then also those that fell asleep in Christ perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are most to be pitied of all men.” (Vers. 12-19)

Philosophy may issue in dualism, pantheism, or materialism; it may make reason or experience the sole criterion of truth; it may glory in the creative imagination of a Plato, or the pure reason of an Aristotle; but Stoics and Epicureans mock and evade the resurrection, which displays the power of God in the scene of man's total nothingness and corruption. Of the soul they may boast. It is man's soul; and its capacity, its intellect, may be as great in the wicked as in the righteous. But God alone can raise the dead. Man has not even the idea. Even the well-read Pliny (Nat. H.) denies the possibility: Revocare defunctos ne Deus quidem potest. Then Oriental thought, which ever thinks of matter as essentially evil, and therefore makes liberation from the body the highest blessing, would help in the same direction those who attach weight to such speculation. Christ, Christ risen from the dead, is not only the death-blow to all these workings of human intellect, but establishes, as the great fact presented by God to faith, victory over evil in Him who bore its consequences, in the righteous judgment of God, that He might deal in sovereign grace with man, give the believer power morally by the Holy Ghost meanwhile, and associate him openly and triumphantly with Christ in the same risen condition ere long, and forever.

We can understand, then, the effort of Satan to bring in among the Christians doubt and denial of the resurrection of the dead. As the seal of Christ's grace and glory, of the miracles He wrought, and the truth He taught, His resurrection is all-important; no less is it the proof of Satan vanquished, of redemption accepted, of God glorified, even as to sin, and sins borne in Christ's body on the tree. It is the power of the new and inner life, and it is the object and spring of the most glorious hope, in which the Christian and the church look to be blessed with Christ in heavenly places, and this in fact, as now in title, Christ having already borne God's judgment for the believer, who has passed from death into life.

In vain, then, did reason object to a state of incomparable superiority to the present, or even to the past, before sin entered, and spoiled the work of God on earth. In vain did it scorn the reunion of soul and body, as if it must be a hopeless imprisonment, a going back, and not forward, and everlasting degradation for the spirit after its emancipation. Christ risen is the completest possible answer, wherein God gives us already to behold by faith man according to His counsels of glory, flowing from His love, and founded on His righteousness: not an idea, but a fact, attested as none ever was since the world began, for precision, and competency, and fullness, as well as certainty, those witnesses alone being excluded which were incompatible with its nature, and which constituted therefore a moral impossibility.

It is impossible to read the Acts of the Apostles without seeing that the resurrection of Christ was the all but unvarying testimony presented to souls, Jews or Gentiles: not merely that He died for our sins, but that God has raised Him from the dead. To say that there is no resurrection of dead men is evidently to set that aside. (Ver. 12.) It is the introduction of Christ which brings every reasoning of man in divine things to the test. The universal message, the gospel to every creature, is that the Savior is raised from the dead after suffering for sin. The denial of the resurrection denies not merely the future hope of the saints, but the standing fact of Christ, the mainspring of God's good news. For it is plain that, if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, what becomes of the apostolic preaching? what of the faith of saints in Corinth, and everywhere else? (Vers. 18, 14) He had told them before that there is salvation by the gospel for such as held fast the truth preached, unless they believed heedlessly, or at random (, ver. 2), in which case they would be as ready to give up as to receive. Now he goes farther, and, instead of speaking of their subjective state as a light reception of the truth, he points out that, if Christ has not been raised, as the gospel declares, the preaching of the apostles was objectively as empty () as the faith of the saints.

But there is something more precise still: “and we are also found false witnesses of God, because we witnessed concerning God that he raised the Christ, whom he raised not, if indeed no dead art raised.” (Ver. 16)

The resurrection of Christ is thus vital and fundamental. It is no accessory privilege, nor proof ex abundanti, which can be lopped off, leaving the stock of divine grace unimpaired. If it is not true, the foundations are gone, the gospel is worthless, God Himself misrepresented, and the witnesses impostors. The immense fact of resurrection was one which Christ not only predicted over and over again, but on it staked the truth of His mission and Sonship. It is the manifestation of that power of deliverance from death and judgment which is the present joy of the Christian, as it is the brightest witness to the efficacy of atonement, and the pledge of glory with Christ at His coming again. Hence too, if it be not true, the chosen witnesses are convicted of falsehood, because their testimony belies God in attributing to Him the raising up the Christ, whom he did not raise, if in fact no dead are raised.

It will be seen how persistently the apostle binds together the resurrection of Christ and of the dead. This is no accident, but the fruit of God's grace and wisdom, who would associate every hope and ground of confidence for His own with Christ; as indeed the Christian is truly united to Him, and knows it. “For if no dead are raised, neither hath Christ been raised; and if Christ hath not been raised, vain [is] your faith; ye are yet in your sins; then those also that fell asleep in Christ perished.” (Vers. 16-18) Again, he argues that, if no dead are raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if He has not, vain () is their faith, in the sense of being without purpose, and without effect; or, as the next clause teaches, “ye are yet in your sins.” The consequence is, of course, no less serious for the believers already passed away: “then also those that fell asleep in Christ perished.” Inferences so shocking as to saints that are gone, as well as for their own souls, yet flowing legitimately from any principle; are no slight evidence of its falsity. But if the conclusions are so inadmissible, who could accept the premises which make them not only just but inevitable?

Thus the future, according to God, is lost, and we are reduced to a hope in Christ for this life only. But if this be all, the Christian, instead of the happiest, is of all men most to be pitied; for he certainly falls under special trials because of his faith in Christ, which is nevertheless fruitless, and leaves him in his sins, if no dead rise; for in this case Christ has not been raised, and perdition must be the portion of all that sleep in Him; they suffer in the present, and they have lost their hope for the future. None can be more pitiable. (Ver. 19)

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Notes on

But there was another question of the deepest moment, and still more fundamental, which the apostle reserved for the last place. The resurrection of the dead was doubted and denied by some at Corinth. This was grave indeed; but it is incomparably more so now, after the ample testimony to the truth rendered here, and throughout the New Testament. It was inexcusable ignorance then; it is far guiltier and more rebellious if we doubt in presence of the disproof we are about to study, and of much more to the same effect elsewhere.

"And I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I announced to you, which also ye received, in which also ye stand, by which also ye are being saved, if ye hold fast with what discourse I announced [it] to you, unless ye believed in vain. For I delivered to you in the first place that which I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he was raised the third day according to the scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas, after that to the twelve. After that he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the most remain till now, but some also have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to James, after that to all the apostles; and last of all, as to the abortion, he appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God; but by God's grace I am what I am, and his grace that [was] towards me became not vain, but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that [was] with me. Whether then I or they, thus we preach, and thus ye believed.” (Vers. 1-11.)

Nothing was farther from the intention of the Corinthian speculators than to compromise the gospel or the resurrection of Christ. But to this exactly does the apostle reduce their question. They forgot that there is an enemy behind who can take advantage of the mind no less than of the body, and whose artifice it is to array falsehood with a fairer garb than the truth, and so not only to gain admission for what is false, but thereby also to expel or undermine what is true, holiness suffering in the same proportion.

It was humbling therefore, but wholesome, to have the gospel made known afresh to saints, who ought rather to be in the fellowship of its activities—to have the apostle insisting on it, (1) as what he had declared to them originally, (2) as what they had received, (3) as that in which they had their standing, and (4) as the means of their salvation. The copulative conjunction, defines each consideration recalled to them; the hypothetical particle, , supposes the fact of their holding fast the glad tidings; otherwise their faith was worthless. Salvation in this epistle, as in many others, is viewed as going on. (Vers. 1, 2.) It is a , the present, and neither the perfect, , as in Eph. 2:5, 8, nor the aorist, as in 2 Tim. 1:9, and Titus 3:5.

If Paul was an apostle, and delivered to thesis especially the glad tidings, it was what he too received, he pretended to no more than a faithful discharge of the trust the Lord had reposed in him as a witness concerning Himself. He received it, as we are told elsewhere, immediately from Christ. There was no intermediate channel, but a direct revelation and a personal charge. And what is the foundation laid? “That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.” (Ver. 3.) Not for ourselves merely, not at all for our good ways, but for our bad, “for our sins.” Who could have said or thought it but God? And He has said it, not only now in the gospel, but from of old in the scriptures. From Genesis to Malachi all was a preparing the way for Christ to die for our sins. The law witnessed to it in the sacrifices; the Psalms declared that the sacrifices were but temporary, and that the Messiah must, and would, do the will of God; and the prophets showed that He would do it by suffering and death when Jehovah should lay on Him the iniquities of His people. Without the death of Christ for our sins, not only has the gospel no foundation, but the Old Testament has no adequate meaning or worthy end.

But God would give the amplest evidence. So it is added to Christ's death (ver. 4), “and that he was buried.” Only here is made no mention of the scriptures. This is reserved for the immense fact of the resurrection: “and that he was raised the third day according to the scriptures,” which is followed by the repeated appearances, of course without any such attestation. It is not merely an accessory fact or corroboration of Christ's death. His resurrection is the grand pivot of the chapter, the display of God's glory as regards man, the fullest answer to all unbelief, and the knell of Satan's power. This was the truth which the enemy sought to undermine among some at Corinth; but the result, under the

grace of God, is the complete demonstration of its certainty, and of its all-importance.

But this is not all that the apostle points out. Christ was not raised only; He “was raised the third day according to the scriptures.” The first book of the law gave its early preparation for it. For from the beginning, even in Eden, though not till after sin entered, God announced that the bruised Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. Still more distinctly do we see the Father ready to give His beloved and only Son, and that Son under the sentence of death till “the third day” (Gen. 22:4), when a ram in the type was substituted, and Isaac was received as from the dead in a figure. (Heb. 11:17-19.) The Psalms give their intermediate but glowing witness, Psa. 8 showing us the Son of man who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, but crowned with glory and honor, with all things put under His feet; Psa. 16, the dependent One, trusting in God through life and death, and beyond. What possibly more distinct “My flesh also shall rest in hope; for Thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life,” &c., words which, as a whole, apply as clearly to the dead and risen Messiah, as they cannot to David or any other. There is no mention of “the third day” here of course, which would be a foreign element, and destructive of the calm confidence of the psalm; but it is plain that for the soul not to rest in sheol, and the body not to see corruption, there must be not only a raising from the deco, but this without delay. His flesh therefore should rest in hope, and not merely the spirit. But the prophets carry on and complete the testimony, for if Hos. 6 be only the principle applicable to Israel by-and-by, Jonah 1:17 is the striking type of the Son of man three days and three nights (so it was counted Jewishly) in the heart of the earth: what a sign to the faithless Jew!

The apostle confirms the resurrection of Christ by certain of His appearances afterward, as He had the death by burial. “And that he appeared to Cephas, after that to the twelve.” (Ver. 5.) He omits Mary of Magdala and the other women, important as both might be for the objects which the evangelists had in view. There is no heaping up of proofs in either Gospels or Epistles, but a selection suitable to the design of God by each writer. The apostle gives only men who for weight, number, or other circumstances, furnished evidence unanswerable for every fair mind. The risen Lord appeared to Cephas, or Simon Peter, before He stood in the midst of “the twelve.” (Compare Luke 24:34.) Nor could any individual be of greater importance than Simon, especially at a moment when his soul needed reassurance so deeply. But no individual could have the weight of the entire company which knew him best; and the twelve are therefore next named, without noticing either the two disciples who had enjoyed His company to Emmaus on the resurrection-day, or that the apostolic body wanted somewhat to complete it on the same evening.

But there is another occasion, testimony to which the apostle points, unsurpassed for magnitude: “after that he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the most remain till now, but some also have fallen asleep.” (Ver. 6.) Never was a truth better attested. The greater part of these five hundred united witnesses still survived if any one doubted; even if a person were prejudiced enough to accuse the twelve of a plot, what unreasonable folly to allow such a thought of so large a body of simple disciples, above all suspicion of object or office? The Holy Spirit left Luke to record the Lord's partaking of food when risen, and John the incredulity of the apostle Thomas, only the more to strengthen the truth; but Paul gives us this great body of witnesses, most then alive, if any chose to examine or cross-examine them. Surely had it not been the simple truth, some of that crowd of eye-witnesses must have disclosed the wickedness of thus conspiring in a lie against God.

“After that he appeared to James, after that to all the apostles.” (Ver. 7.) James had a place of singular honor, both in the church at Jerusalem, and as an inspired writer; and as he was the object alone of an appearance of Christ, this is mentioned, no less than His appearing subsequently to all the apostles. All was in place, and each had its separate importance; and this extending over forty days, with such a variety of occasions and circumstances, marks the care with which divine wisdom and grace made the resurrection known. The quiet statement of the fact is in remarkable contrast with what Jerome quotes from the spurious Gospel of the Nazarenes (Catal. Script. Eccl.), how James made a vow neither to eat nor drink till he saw the Lord risen again. Man spoils all he touches in divine things; be cannot even fill up a gap with a trustworthy tradition. James had no such superiority of faith over the rest; nor, if he had possessed it, would he have shown it by any such vow.

One more remained, the most extraordinary of all, and long after date; “and last of all, as to the abortion, he appeared to me also.” (Ver. 8.) It was from heaven, in broad daylight, as he drew near to Damascus, not only an unbeliever, but the hottest of adversaries, in the midst of a like-minded band of companions: all smitten down, all seeing the light, and hearing the sound, but he alone seeing Jesus, he alone hearing the words of His mouth. Unspeakable grace he felt it was, with unaffected lowliness of heart; “for I am the least of the apostles, who am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.” (Vers. 8, 9.) If Thomas illustrated the difficulties even of believers, Saul of Tarsus is the best sample of opposition on the part of earthly religion. But he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; and the sight of a risen, ascended, Lord becomes the end of his old life (closed in grace by God's judgment in the cross), the beginning of what was new and everlasting. No wonder that, as the others preached by Jesus the resurrection from among the dead, to the horror of the skeptical Sadducees, Paul was no less urgent to both world and church. It was the turning-point of his own conversion, and his penetrating, comprehensive, mind soon saw under God's teaching that the death and the resurrection of Christ were none other things than what Moses and the prophets had said should happen, and light through this be announced both to the Jews and to the Gentiles.

Of this ministry the converted persecutor was to be the most honored instrument. And this he himself could not but add; “but by God's grace I am what I am; and his grace that [was] toward me became not vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that [was] with me.” (Yen 10.) The simple truth carried its own weight. His apostleship, which had been assailed by those who were not less hostile to his full preaching of grace, received no small confirmation; the pride of human nature, in its merits or its wisdom, was put down; God was in every way exalted; and the special point in debate had a crowning testimony from Paul himself, which also accounted for a revolution never surpassed, if equaled, in any man's history since the world began; a revolution which was unintelligible otherwise in one trained, as he had been, in the strictest traditions and ways of Pharisaism, and now the boldest minister of the gospel, the most devoted minister of the church, yet withal a mind eminently sober and conscientious, logical and profound. The appearing of the risen Jesus from heaven explained all perfectly, not his conversion only, but his work beyond all laborious and blessed of God. Truly it was the grace of God that was with him, who loved to own it, while he abased himself.

But of those labors, so abundant and fruitful, what was the foundation truth, and what the animating spring? The resurrection of Christ with Paul, as with the apostles whom some pitted against him. “Whether then I or they, thus we preach, and thus ye believed.” (Ver. 11.) There was no change in the preaching: how then such a departure in some of the Corinthians? It was not so when they believed.

(1 Cor. 14:15-26.)

We have already seen, first, the necessary condition of those who are called to worship. The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, Himself, expressly lets us know that the Father is seeking worshippers, and that the true worshippers are such as by grace worship the Father in spirit and in truth, that they are not only His children but have the Spirit of adoption given whereby to cry Abba, Father. We have seen, secondly, that God is made known in a two-fold manner as object of worship: first of all, in the relationship of Himself as Father; secondly, according to His moral nature as God. The Father is the nearest and most intimate relationship in which it is possible for Him to be known; but it is also needful to worship Him as God, lest there should be a forgetfulness either of His moral nature or of His divine majesty. We have now to enter into a little more detail of a practical kind in order to deal with the third part of my subject: “helps and hindrances to Worship.”

You have already gathered, I trust, clearly, what can scarcely be called a help, since it is the necessary power for worship. Still it may be well for me to touch again on it to-night, because the hindrance from ignorance as to it or unbelief about it is of the greatest importance. I mean the presence of the Holy Ghost, and it is not merely to touch the question of a so-called gift of the Spirit—for I speak now of His acknowledged presence. Clearly this is a capital truth in the matter now before our minds. It connects itself with the very being, not well-being only, of the church. So the Apostle Paul says in Eph. 4:4: “There is one body and one Spirit.” And none will ever be found to have a just acquaintance with the truth of the Holy Ghost in relation to the Christ and the church who have not been taught of God its nature as Christ's body and God's habitation.

So far from this, all attempt to sever the Holy Ghost from Christians and the church issues in errors of the most dangerous character, though perhaps in different, I might say opposite, directions. Where the Spirit is severed from Christ and the church, it then becomes a question of quakerism or of clericalism. The church is either ignored, or it is practically a matter of clergy as the men who assume exclusive possession, with perhaps even control, of the Holy Spirit of God. The one makes the Spirit to be the universal endowment of man, apart from faith or life eternal, and thus blots out the existence in principle of the church of God in which the Spirit dwells as His temple apart from the world of unrenewed men; the other denies the privileges and responsibilities of God's assembly in effect by the un-scriptural invention of the clergy as the one channel of His public and orderly action, the guide of worship, and of authority in discipline. They are thus, if errors at all (as I am sure they are), serious and destructive. I am not now thinking of the issue of souls, but characterize by the word “destructive,” that which is opposed to the will and glory of the Lord Jesus, which surely ought to be of all things dearest to the children of God.

It is not only then the principle of a clergy (I do not mean ministry or the exercise of a divine gift, for this is of God) which is so grave; but there is another form of error, that is apparently nearer the truth, but I think even more distant still, namely, the idea of the Spirit of God being given to every man without exception. The word of God most explicitly shuts out both these wanderings of men's minds. Nowhere in scripture is there such a thought as the Spirit given to man as man. Contrariwise He is given properly and exclusively to the believer.

And here it is we see the importance of distinguishing between the new birth and the gift () of the Spirit. No man receives the Holy Ghost when he is first awakened to God, but as a believer invariably. He is quickened as a sinful man; indeed, if it were not so, he never could be brought out of his wickedness. God deals graciously with him, spite of a rebellious history and all the evil of his nature. Thus is he born again. He repents and believes in Christ; but the Holy Ghost is given to him, never as an unquickened, always as a quickened, soul. Such is the uniform doctrine of the New Testament. “In whom, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba Father.” I do not attach any great importance to the question of the length of time that elapses since they believe; for though only a minute, it is just as real as if it were seven years. It is the believer that receives the Spirit of God. It is the son that receives the Spirit of sonship, that he may have the joy and power of the relationship. But he is already God's son by the faith of Christ; and because he is a son, he receives the Spirit of adoption.

Now this is of great importance in the subject before us, because it is not the simple fact of being quickened on which worship turns, but of the possession of the Spirit. All the children of God that rest on the Lord Jesus in peace, according to God's word—all such have the Holy Ghost. But they may be much hindered by wrong thoughts. The Holy Ghost has thus to do with the soul, when a man has judged himself, and has found in the Lord Jesus and His work all that he wants. He is, therefore, brought by the Spirit to judge himself before God, receiving the Son of God and life in Him.

Such a one submitting to God's righteousness then receives also the Holy Ghost.

But now, as we have seen, comes another, and a very important connection with our subject; the bearing of this on worship. Now I affirm, that according to the doctrine of the New Testament the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven is the active agent and power of all that is for the blessing, and direction, and instruction of the church, and also for the worship of God. It is He who, present in the assembly of God, acts among the children of God, and produces adoration, draws out the hearts in thanksgiving for the mercy that He has shown, and in praise for what the God and Father of Christ is and has revealed to them in His Son. This is worship accordingly. Hence the Holy Ghost cannot be rightly or reverently called a help. He is really the one and only power of carrying on worship in the church of God according to His expressed mind. So we find in the New Testament that worship was invariably conducted, not by a few, still less by only one individual acting for the saints; it was the common joy of the saints of God expressed according to the sovereign and free action of His Spirit in the saints. Hence, therefore, with Christian worship we in due time find the assembly or church of God. Neither can the assembly with propriety be called a help. The one body and one Spirit are the necessary conditions of worship.

These two things, I repeat, are found in order to it: the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; and, again, the Holy Ghost acting not in the individual as an exclusive mouthpiece of praise to God for a congregation, but by whom He will in God's assembly. Still less is there such a thought as man at large—fallen man—invited to draw near and take part in addressing and blessing God, as if capable of worship: a most offensive notion and wholly opposed to all the holiness, grace, and truth of God. I cannot conceive anything more foreign to the plain facts of the New Testament than the idea that the Holy Ghost was given to man as such. The Holy Ghost was given, to man indeed, but first to Christ who knew no sin, and then only to those that believe in Christ. So far from this, He is only given to man when he takes the place of one dead

before God, when he has come to recognize the great truth of Christ dead, the only hope for fallen man. But, then, in no case is the Holy Ghost given to a man as man, but to the man who is born again, when he has called on the name of the Lord as one needing the Savior, and thus confessedly dead before God, lives unto God as one henceforth dead to sin. Therefore it is that, as a matter of fact, until God brought out this great truth, there was no such thing as the gift of the Holy Ghost, which draws out the Christian in worship.

In fact, Christianity only began with the manifestation of these profound truths. In Old Testament times there was no such state of things. Then man was under probation; now there is an end of it, and man is lost or saved as to his soul. Supposing man has been proved guilty of every sin and iniquity, what is the use of trying him any more? Such is the sentence which is now pronounced on man under the gospel. The whole race is declared by God to be in this condition. No one can. or would deny that from the beginning there have been saints, that is, souls that were born of God. But now that the Lord Jesus is brought out as the second Man, the last Adam; following Him there is the gathering out from the world of those who, both in nature and position, are according to the truth in Christ a new creation. They have derived their new character from Christ risen from the dead.

But, further, the Holy Ghost comes down from heaven to act in this new order of things, in this new creation that God has thus produced, founded on Christ the Lord. Therefore the notion of a clergy, an especially consecrated class, distinct from God's children, thoroughly carried out in popery, is utterly false. There one sees the pretensions of man to act as God. On the other hand, we have the opposite error in what is commonly called quakerism, that is, the Holy Ghost given to man as man; and of the two I think quakerism is, if possible, the more revolting. The whole theory is fundamentally evil and erroneous. I am speaking now not of the moral qualities of many Friends but only of the system of quakerism. It is well known that their doctrine on this grave subject is that the Holy Ghost is given to all mankind, to a Jew or a heathen, to an infidel, a Turk, or anybody else. Now I call this of all doctrines professed by Christians the most opposed to the truth of Christianity. Can anything be more offensive? For the teaching of the New Testament as to this is plain: namely, the Spirit is given neither to a man, nor to a caste of men, on the one hand, nor to the race universally on the other; but to those only who stand in Christ. Again, the Spirit, who is the seal and earnest of the individual Christian, baptizes them into one body. Thus may all see that there is one body and one Spirit.

But as for the application of this truth to the matter of worship, let us turn to 1 Cor. 14. It is the just and the fullest statement throughout the New Testament how God intended His will in this respect to be carried on. The apostle writes thus: “What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the Spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the Spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? for thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.” (Ver. 15-17.)

We see from this and much that follows that hindrances to worship were very early brought in. Hence we can learn that it is not merely the absence or the presence of power that is connected with it. There can be no question of the power that was with the Corinthians. It is a great mistake when we hear people talking about Christians without the power to worship. If they have the Spirit, they have the power. There is another and a serious question to consider, the allowance of fleshly motives that makes the coming together a dishonor to God. But it will not do virtually to reproach the Spirit of God with the blame of it, as all seem to do who sanction the question, Have we got the power? The Holy Ghost is faithful, and has never left the church of God. He is always in and with us; He is present to guide and help the saints. It is no question of power, for the Christian has the Spirit to carry on the worship of God. It is rather the power of unjudged flesh which hinders the Spirit of God, and consequently dishonors the Lord Jesus.

So it was in Corinth. There was the fullest proof in that city that it is no question of power. The Spirit of God wrought among those saints manifestly and mightily. They spake with tongues, we are told; but they were carnal. They were in their ways a spectacle of shame, instead of being a practical testimony to the grace of the Lord Jesus. Is not this a solemn lesson to us? We ought to be jealous for the glory of the Lord, and most watchful against anything that would detract from that witness to Him we are called to give as God's children. Now the Corinthians had forgotten this; and the apostle reproves them, “I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all: yet in the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.” (1 Cor. 14:18, 19.)

These philosophic Corinthians were occupied with the power they had received from God instead of seeking His glory. So the apostle has to take them to task as children. He says, “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. In the law it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people; and yet for all that they will not hear me, saith the Lord. Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not: but prophesying serveth not for them that believe not, but for them which believe. If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad? but if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth. How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.” (Ver. 20-26)

I refer to this not as if worship were the only matter for the assembly, but to show that it has a real place therein, and because we see clearly both what the will of God is, and the way in which His will was hindered. The will of God was that the church should come together as His assembly to the glory of the Lord, and when they come together the Spirit would act in that assembly by this or that one in their midst, leading one out into prayer, another into thanksgiving, another into prophesying. But all must be under the hand of the Lord. This was the ground taken. The Corinthians overlooked this, because of pre-occupation with powers conferred, and slipped aside. They brought into the assembly what, if it was the power of the Spirit, was His power wrongly used for self-display, not in order or for edification. Thus the very carnality of the Corinthians becomes, in the grace of the Lord, the means of great instruction to us.

The Corinthian church was in painful disorder; and I ask you Have you profited by it? It is a poor sign of repentance, or moral profit, where men only see the faults of others; rather is it the invariable sign of a heart that is not right before God. Where there is an unexercised conscience, there may be an eye keen and sharp enough in detecting other people. But if you desire to walk with the Lord, I ask you Have you learned His will? Where has God laid down, do you ask, the manner and order of the Christian assembly, how He Himself is to be worshipped in it, and how His children are to be edified? I answer, in His word. There can be no doubt what the will of God originally was for the church. Have we deliberately made up our minds not to seek His will for our worship now? Let us consider the undeniable facts, in the plain word of God, as to this.

I am speaking now in no mean city where Christianity abounds: at least one sees representatives of many denominations. But where, I ask you, among them all is faith in God's word and Spirit as to worship? Where do you find the Holy Ghost left to act freely among the assembled saints? Some may object that, if this were so, it would result in all sorts of disorder. What, the word and Spirit among God's saints lead to disorder! Is it not rebellion to refuse subjection to His will? The Corinthians were disorderly because they slighted it, and their correction is God's rule for us. And it is a far greater sin in the face of such scripture to set up a human order subversive of God's, than even to be as disorderly as they were. Where Christians are gathered to the Lord's name, God is there to set crooked things straight. But if they depart from the scriptural regulations of His assembly, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, it is no matter how admirably the substituted order may be conducted, it is a false state of things. No reform can set right what is radically wrong.

Do you question the facts? or misunderstand the case? I am bound then to explain. You object that the present lecture justifies the ways of modern Christendom. Supposing, for instance, you say we look at such a meeting as this: it is not left to the Holy Ghost's sovereign action in the assembly. Granted: no one contends for blotting out preaching of the word or discoursing to saints. We are not assembled now for worship, &c. One who has received from the Lord Jesus is using his gift for the good of Christians. Thus we are not shut up to one mode or, resource of action. Ministry is not the assembly, although gifts may be exercised there, but not there only. The word of God shows both to be divine without confounding them. There were individuals endowed by our Lord with power from on high to expound, exhort, teach, &c.; and they are not only free but bound to do so: they wrong Him and the church, if they do not. But the exercise of ministry on individual responsibility is quite distinct from the assembly where all come together (gifted or not) in dependence on the Spirit. If I have a gift from God, or what is called in the parable of Matt. 25 such or such a “talent,” I ought to go forth as Apollos or any other of old. God's word is plain; the Lord's call is binding. Woe to the man who refuses! The principle is just the same, whatever the measure or nature of the gift from the Lord; it may be for edifying the saints, or for the conversion of souls.

It is on this principle that all individual ministry is exercised, and therefore one should never find fault with any truly gifted for ministering to the church, or with others who labor to disseminate the gospel, using their gifts among souls converted or unconverted. On the contrary, one would desire to see more and more liberty, more and more power, more and more sense both of dignity and of responsibility in those who thus labor in the word.

But besides all this, and if possible more important still, is the assembly of God, their coming together as such in dependence on the Lord's presence and the free action of the Holy Ghost in their midst carrying them on either in the worship of God or in the edification of one another, perhaps both conjointly. Is this not a part of scripture obligatory on the Christian assembly to the end? Are you prepared to reject God's word as to this for old or new tradition? It is objected indeed that the Epistle to the Corinthians supposes there were tongues and other extraordinary powers. But the absence of tongues, &c, can never nullify God's word for all that abides. Have you given up this Epistle, as God's principle? If you are not acting on this word of His, you are acting on man's, on a mere innovation, in short you are clearly fallen into departure from scripture; and in this at least are not doing the will of God. No wise Christian looks for sign-gifts as things are; but their absence and consequently the non-application of what regulates their action in the assembly cannot efface for faith God's principle and regulation of all that remains.

Along with the fact that there is the one body as well as the one Spirit, there is the responsibility that God's assembly should give itself up to the Lord, in dependence on the Holy Ghost; that the assembly should come together looking to the Lord to work in them by the Holy Ghost. This is all one contends for; and every intelligent Christian must contend for this, or give up his profession of cleaving to apostolic authority and order. God's assembly with His Spirit freely acting in the midst is the essential condition as regards Christian worship. You may say that in the present ruined state of Christendom one can only have it in an imperfect condition. But this is the will of the Lord for all His saints; this is the one scriptural view of God's assembly meeting here below. There were certain outward powers or signs, gifts that have lapsed or been withdrawn from the church. As to this I am far from agreeing with those who, particularly in this part of the country, some years ago, fell into a great delusion by yearning after the revival of miraculous vouchers and tokens. To my conviction, as the church is now, it was an unspiritual thought, and an unholy desire. The children of God would have shown a truer sense of what is due to God by humiliation in sackcloth and ashes, by repentance, and so seeking the path of obedience in the waste, rather than by wistful aspirations after these outward displays of power which once adorned the church as the vessel of Christ's glory. I believe, if there had been a deeper and more just judgment of our fallen estate among the children of God; they would have been kept from this error and been, spared the terrible dishonor of the Lord's name that ensued, not only in wildfire and demon power but in false doctrine as to Christ.

They were right in feeling the Babylonish confusion of Christendom; but they ought to have ceased from all they knew to be contrary to God's word, and they ought, while humbling themselves for their own sin and that of all in setting Him at naught so long, to have praised Him for the presence of the Holy Ghost, and asked grace to act on it without anxiety or hesitation. But no, they were in the same unbelief as others, and prayed for Him to be given afresh, as if He were not sent down to abide forever, and hence they fell into even greater abominations than the rest, as they saw the evil more, and yet set up higher pretensions, with no faith whatever. For nobody doubts what is the Lord's will as to the Christian generally. Instead of doing it and abstaining from all inconsistent with it, they prayed for extraordinary power, and had the audacity to set up apostles, prophets, &c, once more, as a revived system.

Now it ought to be plain to any spiritual mind that such a revival could not be in our present ruin. If the Lord gave the public signs of faith to all, it would sanction the wicked, divided, faithless condition of Christendom; if He gave to you only, it would be a practical denial of all His saints elsewhere. Impossible that the Lord would do either. He continues all the gifts needful for His work in man and in the church; but He would deny neither the faithful presence of His Spirit on the one side nor the ruin-state of Christendom on the other, as this delusion in effect denied both. He did pledge all that was necessary for perfecting the saints, and He has fulfilled it; He did not pledge Himself either to continue or if possible still less to restore, a series of sign-gifts, and He has done nothing of the sort. It was only a false appearance brought about by the enemy in a very presumptuous sect. Indeed no holy person could conceive the Lord bestowing such gifts indiscriminately any more than to a party.

For, if we test it, where can we conceive the Lord would begin? In Rome? “Oh!” says some good Protestant, “this would never do, give them to Rome!” Yet be assured that there have been not a few who, even in that idolatrous system, have lived and died in the Lord—nay, I believe, been not only pious laymen but priests, and monks, and popes. Yet you will all rightly feel that if the Lord were to vouchsafe the wonderful signs of His spiritual power, throughout that idolatrous system, it would seem His sanction of its iniquity.

Suppose in the next place that He gives powers to all. I do not know how many denominations there may be: still He gives them to all the denominations! “Oh, no,” some zealous Plymouthist would exclaim, “this would never do; it would sanction denominations contrary to His word.” To whom then could they be given? To the Plymouthist so-called? Let me tell you that the “Brethren” in question have just enough to do to be kept themselves aright; and I am perfectly persuaded that, if they could have had these powers given to them exclusively, there would be an intoxicating cup administered, ruinous to the Lord's glory and to their blessing. To my firm conviction nothing could more falsify all that we own to be His mind. We do confess the one body and one Spirit; we do not deny our present ruin-state, but mourn it. I would not, if such a thing could be, have for myself or desire for any saint, what would exalt us to the depreciation of the truth or to the ignoring of others, no less members of Christ than ourselves, but above all what would lower and misrepresent our Lord. There would be the utmost danger, yea, the moral certainty, of their becoming what their worst enemies say they are now. It would directly tend to their denying the Christian name to all other saints, and it would practically deny their testimony to the ruin of that which bears the Lord's name here below. Therefore, as it appears to me, when the Lord saw all going to ruin, He righteously and in wisdom discontinued those external powers.

The Lord Jesus said in Mark 16 that these signs should follow; but He never said how long they were to last. They did follow them that believed; and there is the simple truth of the matter. For their continuance or revival you have no divine warrant.

If you, brethren, believe in the presence of the Spirit of God, it will be no question to your minds but clear and sure that. He acts by whom He will in the assembly, as certainly as by individuals in the way of ministry. It is as important as it is true, that the ministry is a permanent and divine institution; but, then, the same Spirit, who thus works individually, works corporately in the church. Do you doubt the competency, or willingness of the Holy Spirit to maintain order in the assembly? Suppose, for instance, it were only a human company: a gentleman asks a dozen of his friends to his house for dinner, what, I wonder, would be thought, if anyone were to say, “It is a very dangerous thing to have these twelve persons at dinner; I am afraid there must be grave disorder.” You would feel that this would be rather strong language; and if men can feel confident that at a decent table there need be no distrust of propriety, can Christians doubt that the Lord would give order among God's children meeting in His name? Is God the author of confusion? What is it that accounts for such thoughts? The unbelief of the world, which neither sees nor knows the Holy Spirit, the fear that God's children will be actuated only by fleshly motives on such occasions. The real presence of the Lord in His assembly is not thought of.

No doubt, if Christians came together as so many men, with no Lord to look to, as if God took no concern or control in His own assembly, there might be nothing but disorder. And this is the very tiling I would impress on you who do meet in the Lord's name: we meet not merely with mutual love and courtesy as Christians, we meet as members of Christ who compose God's assembly. Can any conceivable principle clothe with such confidence and solemnity the gathering together of souls on earth? It is no invention or assumption of ours; it is the will of the Lord for all that are His own here below. You, if a Christian, are unfaithful if you do not so meet, nor is it possible according to scripture duly to worship Him otherwise.

But the assembly of God, like the presence of the Spirit, is more rightly perhaps to be viewed as the condition of worship in the hour that is now come, than as a help to it.

A most important help certainly in the worship of God is the Lord's supper. In the early church they were so filled with the Spirit and so enjoyed the fellowship of one another at the Lord's table that they came together for this purpose every day. At that day they first knew that Christ was in the Father, they in Him, and He in them. And no wonder. It was a new and truly divine thing, that holy fellowship; and when they met together, that which expressed this and more than this, the Lord's supper, was always before their hearts. So we are told in Acts 2:46; “And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.” This is the picture that is presented by the new-born church of God.

We have a view of the same supper of the Lord still later (Acts 20); and no doubt, as the Spirit of God has given us both, so each is for an important purpose.

From the first statement we gather that it would not be wrong to take the Lord's supper every day if circumstances called for it, simply and holily, as then. In Acts 20 we have the more ordinary state of things; and thence we learn that the habit of the church was to break bread on the first day of the week. We are further told that “Paul preached,” though it is not properly preaching, but discoursing. There we find just what we may see elsewhere, liberty in the gathering together of the church for one who may be so led of the Lord to instruct or exhort the brethren. Assuredly there is nothing that shuts up the assembly from edification by the word, even when met to break bread.

Anyone that denies this seems to me fighting against plain scripture; for I have known persons, in their reaction from going to hear a sermon, allow themselves the thought that, because we come together to break bread, there is no room for the Holy Ghost to teach or exhort by whom He will.

The breaking of bread is and ought to be the standing service for the saints on each Lord's day, but not so as to exclude the action of the Spirit for the joy of faith and help of the saints. Only let all be simple and real, which the Holy Spirit alone can give or keep up.

It is common again to find saints who, if they do not despise, certainly neglect, the Lord's supper. Their fear of ordinances perhaps, or more generally their fondness for preaching, causes them to swing to the opposite side. Worship is thus well-nigh lost. Such a habit necessarily lowers the place of God's children or church into that of mere hearers. Not that it is not important to receive instruction; but it will be found that, where by grace you take and hold your place as true worshippers, you also receive the profit of the truth a hundred-fold more than when you sink into a mere auditory.

Those who are content to be no more than hearers never come to perfection, to use the apostle's words. They are stunted in their spiritual growth, instead of increasing by the knowledge of God. Nor wonder at this.

For the present aim of grace is forgotten or unknown. The object of God in bringing us to the knowledge of Himself in Christ is to draw out our souls to His praise in worship, and to His glory in service. The Lord's supper is the central feast. For the Christian to abandon this for sermon-hearing is a woeful and disastrous descent, which settles him down to the means and not the end of God, not to speak of immense loss in every way. In short, then, the evangelical idea and practice of merging worship in sermons, besides being an evident departure from the revealed will of God, dishonors the Lord and His death, grieves the Holy Ghost who would glorify Jesus, and injures the children of God

beyond calculation.

But we learn from a previous chapter (11) of 1 Corinthians that, as the right use of the Lord's supper is of all consequence in God's worship, so there is danger in various ways to the saints. The Corinthians lacked gravity in this as in other things; and the Lord both resented and corrected the evil. They appear to have mixed up the love-feast or agape with the Lord's supper; and as they allowed nature to come in (probably from old habits as heathens), some were guilty of excess in eating and drinking, while the poor were made to feel their condition. This was in every way most grievous; and the apostle was led of the Lord not only to explain that His hand had been dealing with some in sickness, and others in death or falling asleep, but to separate in future the Lord's supper from any such feast.

Further great principles are laid down of the utmost value for our permanent good. “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.” (Ver. 26-32.)

Thus, on the one hand, self-examination is urged on the Christian—never a doubt, but to prove himself, but this with a view to come, not to stay away. On the other hand, if one eat or drink lightly (that is, “unworthily"), he eats and drinks judgment (not “damnation,” as it is most faultily rendered, but judgment) to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. Hence, when the Corinthians failed in self-judgment and treated the Eucharist unworthily, they fell under the Lord's judgment, which, however serious and humbling, was really merciful, for, when judged, they were chastened of Him that they should not be condemned with the world. That is, even this wrong brought not” damnation” but His chastening judgment.

Hence we see that the Lord's supper constantly before us is meant to call forth in the saints this constant habit of self-examination. And we see at once how important is its bearing on the worship of the saints. For if they come carelessly, the Spirit in very faithfulness will testify to it; and they will then, if honest, betake themselves rather to confession than to praise, and thus the proper worship of the assembly will be interfered with and hindered. If due self-examination go on, the conscience is kept good, and the heart can flow out, as the Spirit guides, in praise and thanksgiving unimpeded around the table of the Lord. Thus the instruction of the Lord lets us know what a help there is when the Lord's supper holds its due place, what a hindrance when it is despised or abused.

Let me here notice what is often a difficulty to some persons respecting a hymn-book. We have a book of Psalms in the Old Testament, but none in the New Testament—only the certainty that the Christians in these the earliest days had in use among them such metrical compositions as are styled “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.” Why such a marked difference? They do not see through the cavil of such as harp on the inconsistency of written hymns and of extemporaneous prayers. But the truth is scripture is plain that in the apostolic age such were the facts. They had hymns, &c, to sing, whilst they prayed according to the moment. To have hymns then is quite right, according to God's word. It is an utter error in all who think that hymns were impromptu compositions which the Spirit of God gave on the spot. There is no warrant for any such notion. For example, the Corinthian brethren came each with a psalm. This does not mean the 316 Psalms of David, but a Christian psalm. Hence the fact is that, in all lands and tongues where Christianity is known, the believers are sure to express their Christian joy and thanksgiving in suited hymns, because the New Testament supposes a new state of happiness through the gospel such as must needs find such a vent spontaneously.

For now the saints are shown to be perfectly blessed in Christ, and having the Spirit as a well of water within springing up into everlasting life. They long for Christ to come, or to depart and be with Him. In the Old Testament, on the contrary, there was the fear of death which kept them all their lifetime subject to bondage. It was as to them an unexplored and dark region. Christ's death and resurrection have changed all for us. Whereas for the most part the joy in the book of Psalms is on this side of the grave, and hence in the presence and reign of the Messiah. On the other hand, in the New Testament, the Messiah having come and gone after accomplishing redemption, the church is being called. There is therefore no need of inspiring a book of psalms, for the Christian has the salvation of his soul, and can joy in God fully revealed and known, and hence he makes psalms and spiritual songs for himself. What a help and power to worship is not this?

But there is a remark I may be allowed, and not unnecessary in the use of these compositions. If the Spirit had to provide ready-made a praise-book for Israel, but left it for the Christian heart and mind to do this work according to their measure, there is nothing more needed than self-judgment and dependence on God in using hymns in the assembly. It is really a solemn thing to give out a hymn there, because thereby almost more than in anything else you risk, if wrong, drawing the whole congregation along with you, or you compel them to mark their sense of your error by an ominous silence. Thus it is plain that in giving out a hymn in the assembly, when if a man goes wrong there is or is not spiritual discernment, it becomes much more serious than those conceive who think there is nothing so easy as to spend a little while together in singing a nice hymn. For this the Holy Ghost is required, for He, dwelling in that assembly as God's temple, knows just what is wanted. But thanks be to God! He is there to guide according to the present mind and will of God. This should lead one to be not morbid but prayerful, to watch earnestly that it be the Lord's guiding and not his own will in any way. On the other hand, if the Spirit guides in a hymn, it is no less serious to slight it through a crotchet or perhaps a feeling against the person who gave it out. How all-important is the presence and action of God's Spirit in the church of God! I commend this not on the ground of common sense, but as the certain will of God to you as His children on the ground of faith. I might much extend this lecture by touching on many other helps and hindrances to worship; but this may suffice for the present.

May you have grace to be faithful in following out the truth as you learn it from God! If any deliberately prefer what man has set up to His will for His church, I must leave them in His hands to whom they must give account. There is no reasoning that can stand before the word of God; and the Spirit will surely strengthen all whose eye is single both to know and to do the Lord's will.

The Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly, Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly: Part 6

This should teach us to lean on the Lord, and, as God's assembly, seek to be faithful to His word. But it is most important to remember that God's assembly as a whole is now in a state of ruin. That man is not to be trusted who holds the precious truth of the presence of God in the church, without the sense of the condition of things at this present moment. We need this deeply; for where it is lost sight of, there is apt to be such rashness, and dangerous high-mindedness in the use of truth, as would leave us outside the action of the Spirit of God.

So with a person who is brought to God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not merely that He is brought to God through faith. This is quite true; but there is that also which puts the soul in the dust in the confession of its total ruin, as truly as there is the sense of the blessedness into which it is brought. And so is it now, when God has not merely placed us in such intimate relations with Himself as an assembly, but has also shown us the state of the church generally. Of all persons on the face of the earth, those favored thus ought to remember it most, and practically too.

But again we observe another point of interest. We see in the course of this chapter the fact coming put that in the assembly, as Paul knew it, the same kind of action appears as we are familiar with. We have praying, thanks, and blessing enumerated. The grand center of these last is the table of the Lord, as we learn from the preceding chapters (10 and 11) Here, on the other hand, it is the action and presence of the Holy Spirit. But I would recall to you that we here read of just the same elements as are met with now, not of course all that then were, but as far as they go. God indeed is faithful.

Further, we see very plainly in this chapter that powerfully as “a tongue” might serve as a sign to unbelievers, what the apostle prefers a great deal is that which acts in and by the understanding to edify all. He takes particular pains to mark that his feeling on the subject was not through jealousy, or because he had not so many gifts as some boasted. The apostle had no ground personally to decry in any way the gifts about which he was speaking; for (ver. 18) he say, “I thank my God, I speak in a tongue more than ye all.” But what the Lord wants is edification, that is, the building up of the saints. And the growth of the saints is inseparable from the activity of divine love on their behalf in and by the truth. This is therefore pressed. Whatever was not somehow to edification was unsuited to the assembly.

Here I may say as a principle, that this should guard us against any love of singularity amongst the saints of God—such as, among the young, the vanity of preaching on hard scriptures. Now, no doubt, by dwelling on some such portions of the word of God there may be a kind of factitious interest created in passing, or by giving some application of a plain text that no one else has heard of. This always seems to me uncommonly small; and, further, I cannot but think it really evinces a want both of self-judgment and of earnest desire for the edification of the saints. The thing to be sought is what will manifest God. Could one conceive of Paul doing such a thing? find in our blessed Lord exactly the contrary. He was the absolute perfection of all grace and truth. How He takes up the simplest facts, the most common objects of daily life! how He turns to account the woman sweeping her kitchen floor, if I may say so, for a lost piece of silver; or the shepherd seeking for his lost sheep! The most trivial incidents in His hands are vehicles of the highest truths for the soul. For there it is where power proves itself—bringing God into such matters, and making them the witness of His gracious interest in our souls. How blessed it becomes when one sees in the trite objects of every day the dignity and grace of the Lord! It brings home to us God acting by Him. As for the novelty that claims to be original, it may be ingenious like fireworks; but what if we never can trust it, whether it be true or not? How unlike God's ways in Christ!

But I merely speak of this now, as giving a practical turn to the very principle that was then at work among the Corinthians. They were occupied with what would electrify and surprise, and not with that which would help the growth of the soul in the knowledge of God Himself.

The apostle comes to another consideration (ver. 21). He draws attention to the scriptures in the Old Testament that speak of foreign tongues. Whenever God's people came in contact with other tongues, they had got all wrong. If Israel had remained in their integrity, such strange sounds would have been kept far away. They were let loose on them when they departed from their true place. The Corinthians would do well to ponder, that foreign tongues in Israel's case had not a good connection: this might remind them of their own vain folly, being in no way an honor to the Jews.

Besides, for whom were the tongues meant? “Wherefore” (ver. 22) “tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not.” The Corinthians were using them for a display among believers—was it not strangely unintelligent? “But prophesying” —that which they really slighted—is “not for them that believe not, but for them which believe.” This is its direct use. But now he points out another thing, that, although prophesying is not in its direct use addressed to unbelievers, it may have a mighty effect on them, and in a way too that tongues could not have. This he puts in a pungent hypothesis (ver. 23). “If, therefore, the whole church be come together in one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?” Such would be the effect, supposing they were all speaking with tongues (and if good for one, they thought it was for all). But (ver. 24) “if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all; and thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest” The result is that he is constrained to do homage to God, reporting that “God is in you of a truth.”

This is a point that I would impress on you all, of the greatest importance for ourselves. We are called to look to the Lord that we may not hinder the manifestation of God in the conscience even of an unbeliever. When we do come together as His assembly, let it never be that we may take part, but that He may work both as, and by whom, He will. Neither, again, let us be impatient. Our part is to count on Him; neither hindering others, nor refusing to go forward if He leads. Suppose that there is a silence that may be painful to some—never surely a sign of the power of God there, but, on the contrary, that there is something which hinders—still let us not doubt but believe. He knows how to try and humble, as well as to comfort. The main thing is to seek always His unfailing presence and action. In the long run He never disappoints, as man always does. Yet we do not go to sit silently, but to worship audibly and be edified. Silence is quite exceptional. For our God is not a mute stock, but One Who has spoken to us, and Who gives us now to speak for Him and to Him. The church of God therefore is in no way the witness of a dumb idol, but of the living and true God Who is in the midst of it. We ought to desire when we come together that there be liberty, not restraint; but even this is not so painful as the forwardness of those who must speak because there is an open door, not because God gives them the word to build up His own.

We ought to pray then that, when we come together, God would manifest His presence there in our midst, and that nothing should be done that is not suitable to Him. It may be a very simple soul that He uses: I am sure that God can do it by one who has nothing of this world's learning, and that He loves to do so. But still we must cry up neither unlearned nor learned, or suppose that there is any particular virtue in the mere circumstances of the saints of God, though it is no small witness that there is liberty in the assembly, when the simplest are welcomed in their desires to edify. But this, remember, is for God, and not for ourselves. Edification is not by giving out a hymn, or reading a

chapter, because there is silence, and we can bear to wait no longer; nor is it because a particular chapter has blessed ourselves that it should be read. Why should not I be content to enjoy the chapter myself? Why bring it out then? Have I the assurance that God would have it to be read there? This is a very searching test; but surely, where it is God Who gives the word, those who are spiritual would have the sense of it. Who is sufficient for these things? Our sufficiency is of God, Who has given us His Spirit for this and all other ends in the church now.

The great aim, then, is the manifestation of God's presence in the assembly. It was, no doubt, only a conceived case where the apostle supposes them all prophesying, but the principle is true universally. And we find, in fact, an important regulation as to this soon follows.

Another point we have in the 26th verse— “How is it, then, brethren? whenever ye come together, each of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation.” The apostle does not formally condemn this. He leaves it as an open question, to be judged on spiritual principles. I do not say that he approves of it: he states the simple fact; but he now brings in what was to judge that fact on every occasion. What is the great criterion here? “Let all things be done unto edifying.” Could they say so? Could the person who had a psalm say that his motive was to edify? could the man who had a doctrine or the like? Let them search and see. There is One who knows the truth; and this is the One pleased to act in the church of God. It is thus a challenge, as it were, to God where the soul dares in His presence to act out of its own will and inclination. Can anything be more solemn than for a person unexercised to take part in the assembly? What continual self-judgment is due to see whether one's motive arises from simple obedience to the will of God?

To press this would not hinder God's action, it would only question our own; and this is why God lays down the principle. It would give seriousness. A man should think of Him before he speaks or reads. He should not give out a hymn simply because it was a sweet one in itself, or a favorite of his own. All these things might be true; and they might be well enough in one's own home. But here God is acting with a view to the edification of the assembly; and the point is, Am I confident in my soul that it is God who is guiding me Now, the apostle Peter lays this down most positively where he says, “If any man speak, let him speak as oracles of God “: according to the oracles of God is not enough. One might speak according to the scriptures, and yet be out of season; for in this he might be wrong, because it was not what God would give then, for He alone knows what is best and for His own glory. The meaning in fact is, If any man speak, as His oracle, or mouth-piece, it was to be then and there. This is a serious thing for one's soul. Am I sure that God would have a given word spoken now? Is it suited for God's assembly at this time? I ought to wait, if I am not sure about it. It is what the Spirit of God implies in the exhortation, “Let all things be done to edifying.” But Peter's scripture puts it expressly.

If there is solemnity on the one hand, there is also love and liberty on the other. If I am too much afraid, I must take care that I be not wrapping up in a napkin what is lent for the good of others. So we cannot escape from danger on either hand. The man who is always silent, because he is afraid, what witness is he of the grace that feeds the flock in due season? and, on the other hand, the man who is always so ready to come forward, whose witness is he? Alas! only of his own spirit, of his own self-confidence, nothing better. Hence what we have to look for is that God act here, and nothing should satisfy us short of this. The spiritual will appreciate it, and every child of God reaps the blessing, though the carnal would, no doubt, prefer what pampers man. How blessed the assembly walking in faith, love, and obedience!

But, further, the apostle lays down (ver. 27) that If any man speak in [an unknown] tongue, let it be by two, and at the most by three, and that by course, and let one interpret.” If there were no interpreter, it had no business there. Edification is the rule absolute in God's assembly.

In due course we come to the other gift—prophesying (ver. 29). Surely you could not have too much prophesying! This is what he rules, “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge.” Why so? Because God is thinking of the edification of His assembly. Supposing half a dozen persons were to speak one after another, what would be the effect? Why, it would really be too much of a good thing. It must be bewildering to many, particularly to the simple saints; and God always thinks of the little ones: the stronger ones do not need so much His care, or, at least, not precisely in the same way. They might possibly get good by it. But God, I repeat, thinks of the little ones; and what would perplex the simple, or be over-much, God here forbids. “Let all things be done unto edifying.” So that, whilst the Spirit of God stops the strange tongues unless they could be turned to edification, He does not allow even prophesying beyond the measure that would be for the profit of all.

Another thing laid down next (ver. 32) is that the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. Because what some of these Corinthians maintained (judging from the blow that is struck at it here) was that they could not interfere with prophesying; that, if any had the Spirit to speak, they must speak. Paul says to them, You are talking as men might who are possessed by evil spirits: this might be the case with a man under a demon; but is it so with the Spirit of God? The Holy Spirit never puts a man, as it were, into a vice. He in His operation makes it no kind of necessity. In a moral way, He may lay it on the heart; but in the assembly we never find man thus absolutely obliged to speak. Balaam might have been in an extraordinary manner forced to give an utterance, just as his ass then spoke under an imperative power; but surely one ought not to think of either as being analogous to the action of the Holy Ghost in God's assembly.

No, the Corinthians who said or pretended (as an excuse for their love of hearing themselves speak so often) that it was necessary, were all wrong. This is a most important principle, and that too on the side of good, as well as a warning on the side of evil. For as the 30th verse tells us, “If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.” “Revelation” had this stamp of superiority over anything else. The scripture was not yet all revealed. “For (ver. 31) ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all assemblies of the saints.” No power delivers from responsibility to the Lord in the use of the power; and He who is Lord has regulated the due use of each gift by His word, as here by the apostle's. Spiritual power must subserve His lordship and bow to His authority. Irresponsible or irresistible power in the church is not of the Holy Spirit.

In ver. 34 we hear of one class, and only one in the church of God, who are not allowed to take any part in public, viz., the women. Not that God does not give as precious gifts to women as to men: but whatever gifts be given them to exercise, it is not in the assembly that the Lord allows this to be done. I am aware that some have used this as a reason for women preaching. The idea of females preaching to the world was an irregularity not even yet contemplated. It is not supposed that woman had so completely forgotten the propriety of nature. No Corinthian even wished her to go with unblushing face before the world, nor yet pleaded the case of “perishing sinners” as an excuse for forfeiting that retirement which always becomes her sex.

As for the women spoken of here, they might have argued thus—and I suppose they did— “If we cannot preach, surely we might speak in such a holy place as the assembly. There the men will not misunderstand, or impute it to any want of decorum.” If there was any place at all

where women might speak, it surely must be in the assembly. But it is forbidden there—not meaning by this that they were free to preach before the world, but that they might not speak anywhere publicly, not even in the assembly. I grant you that in their own homes or with women, there is a place; or a married woman might speak with her husband; but in the assemblies of the saints, it was plainly and peremptorily forbidden. What therefore was to be done? “If they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in [the] assembly” (ver. 35). He does not suppose that the young unmarried ones even wished to speak in the assembly, but only the older ones. Of course, the younger ones would ask their parents or the like.

“What,” continues he, “came the word of God out from you, or came it unto you only?” The word of God comes out from no church, and it comes to no saints exclusive of others. What a principle, and how deep reaching and important for all! The reverse of this is what the church has always desired in one form or another. I do not know a single society that is called of man a church that has not sought to originate what ought to have been left to the word of God.1 When a church lays down its rules, when it formulates its beliefs, when it puts forth anything to be acted upon for discipline, or government, or doctrine, when it quits simple subjection to the word of God, it falls into the same error that the Corinthian assembly is here guarded against. It is evident that their error was really (not in bare form, of course, but in principle) the progenitor of the present disorderly condition that exists in Christendom from the Pope down to the smallest sect of Protestantism. For what we find in the Epistle is, not that the Corinthian church was the only place where these gifts of the Holy Ghost were, but an assembly where He was interfered with, where much was perverted, where human principles were allowed to hinder the blessed action of the Spirit of God. To their charge accordingly was laid interference with the Lord's order and authority.

For there are two grand principles in the chapter, both working in connection with the central truth of God's presence in the assembly. Around that uniting fact are these two guards— “Let all things be done to edifying” (verse 26), and “Let all things be done decently and in order” (verse 40): one, the activity of the power of divine grace, and the other, the correction and guard of its displays; that, whatever might be done in the desire for edification, there should be submission to the authority of the Lord Jesus. The church is for His glory, edification is the aim, and this in comely order according to the word of the Lord.

It is instructive to remark here, as has been often done before, that no elders appear to have been as yet in Corinth. Such there were in many of the assemblies; and they were of course desirable in all when the due time was come. But in Corinth they are not spoken of, where, if any existed, it would be reasonable to hear of them. This is of great moment, because it proves that they are in no way essential to what God addresses as His assembly. In the most ecclesiastical of the where church discipline, both in putting out and in restoring, are most developed, where we have the fullest light as to the Lord's Supper and the assembly of God &c, elders are ignored, and, as I believe, evidently not there. But it is mere ignorance to conclude that, where elders were, as at Ephesus, &c., the gifts were not exercised, or that the assembly of God was not competent to act as in 1 Cor. 11; 12; 14. The happy reflection is that, when there are no apostles to choose, the Lord continues the presence of His Spirit. Have we faith to act on the ground of His assembly? But the one-man ministry, when used (as it is in Christendom) to deny His action by whom He will, and this in His assembly, is as unscriptural as the Papacy. They are verily guilty who imply a change in the assembly by trying to pervert 1 Timothy and Titus, or Rev. 2; 3, so as to neutralize 1 Corinthians, as well as to justify the device of the one-man minister. But it is all vain. Scripture, being divine and of course consistent, cannot be broken; and the Lord is speedily coming to judge the many “idols” (1 John 5) of those who bear but in effect deny His name.

Thus then we have the presence of the Spirit of God making good the precious truth that God is in the assembly. There is the activity of His love in seeking the edification of His saints as the motive, but there must also be no infringement of the commandment of Him who is Lord (ver. 37). All these canons were no doubt written by the apostle, but they are none the less His commandment. The word of God comes to the Corinthian church—it does not originate thence. Further, it comes not to these saints abode, but to all. The place of the church is never to teach but to bow to the word of God. The church has no authority in such matters—it can originate neither doctrine nor government. The church's place is to be subject, and this of course to the Lord. It is not exactly right to say that the church is under the presidency of the Spirit of God: a well-meant but unscriptural expression. The Lord is in the midst; and hence the apostle brings in “the Lord” where it is a question of authority. The Spirit has taken the place rather of service; and hence (as pointed out the last time I spoke), where operations are referred to, it is He Who works all in power; but where it is a question of authority, the Lord Jesus rules. He it is accordingly whom the Spirit gives us to know as in authority over us when we come together, as at all other times. For we have to guard against the snare of those who avail themselves of Jesus being Lord, to deny that the Spirit both divides sovereignly and works all in all.

Let us be careful, while we seek only what is for edification, that all things be done decently and in true order, our aim being the promotion of the glory of the Lord Jesus. Let us judge ourselves continually by the standard of the word, and, in particular, let the assembly be governed by these special scriptures which apply to it where most apt to stray, as in fact it has so erred generally. W. K.

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The Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly, Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly: Part 5

1 Corinthians 12, 14

In chapter 14 the gifts, of which the apostle had been speaking in chapter 12, are supposed. To argue as unbelief does, as if there were nothing in chapter 14 of the same nature as in chapter 12, is mere folly. But, coming to the point now, there is one thing desirable to be explained before mentioning the general argument of the apostle. In the beginning of the chapter he contrasts prophesying with tongues at great length, speaking of the former in these terms (ver. 3), “He that prophesieth speaketh unto men, to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” Now there is many a person that understands this to mean that whoever speaks to exhortation and comfort prophesies. This is to mistake him. You could not invert the sentence and still hold the truth. What the apostle means is that the man who only speaks in a tongue does not edify, nor does he exhort or comfort; the man who prophesies does. The truth is, that prophesying is the highest character of divine communication through man. It is not a question of opening futurity, but of bringing God and the soul together. An instance of it we may see in the case of the woman of Samaria. What Christ said to her evidently brought God Himself home to her conscience, and she at once awoke to the conviction that He who spoke was a prophet. Prophecy is therefore the most intimate and direct communication of God in dealing with

the soul, giving a person the certainty that the mind of God is being expressed. Of course the man that prophesies does edify; but there are many other forms of ministration to the soul. There is comfort and exhortation in teaching; and again, in preaching the gospel great comfort might be given to the heart; but still these things are distinct from prophesying.

Now the apostle singles out (I make this remark for the purpose of a little help to the understanding of the general scope of the chapter) two gifts, one of which was slighted, the other overvalued, by the Corinthians. They slighted prophesying, because they were not in adequate degree exercised about the enjoyment of God. They cried up signs and tongues; and the apostle has given them various severe blows, from the beginning to the end of the Epistle, as to their low condition in this very particular. In short, they were walking as men. They enjoyed intellectual exercise, lively speculations, sparkling flow of eloquence. All these things had charms for the Corinthian saints. I do not mean that it was not about Scripture. Of course it may have been; but what they did not enjoy was God dealing with their souls. And the reason is plain. They were in an unbroken state. Some of them had been getting litigious, others making light of heathen temples and sacrifices; there was disorder in worship, foundation-doctrine questioned, some of them (as we know) not even moral, gross sin being very slightly judged.

Well, as we saw, the apostle confronts these two gifts, prophesying and tongues, chiefly, because they are the antipodes, as it were, of one another-speaking in a tongue being one of the lowest forms in which God's Spirit wrought, as prophesying is the highest. He censures them for their habit of speaking with tongues in the assembly of God, while there was no real value felt for prophesying. How came this? They had started upon a false idea. Their notion being that the church was the place for the display of divine power, and speaking with tongues being one of the most striking and conspicuous proofs of God's power, it was, they thought, the most fitting display for the church of God. Not so, says the apostle, who therefore brings in, as a means to help them to a sound estimate, the bearing of love. There is nothing so characteristic of God amongst His own as love. For we are not here speaking of love going out towards the rebellious, as for instance the gospel used in winning souls. Remarkably enough, the gospel never occurs in this chapter, most precious as it is in its own place. In the Epistle to the Ephesians the evangelist is an essential feature; and there accordingly the Lord puts him forward in a most important way, as connected not merely with souls but with the church. This ought not to be forgotten, the evangelist being one of those who are given “for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). Here he disappears, because it is not the witness of love to the church, still less to the world. It is the presence of God in the church before the world, that is the point in our Epistle.

The Corinthian idea was that whatever displayed power in them before the world was the object for the church. Not a “tongue without an interpreter,” says the apostle: there is no love in it; and consequently, as he shows here (chap. 14, verse 3), thereby is no comfort no? anything that acts upon the soul to edification. This is the effect of divine love. There never can be real edification without divine love in some way or other acting in power on other souls, as it is that which works in him that speaks.

So the apostle brings these two gifts together at considerable length. He points out the unwisdom of dragging these unknown tongues into the church simply because they were a display of divine power. But what follows? We have the striking way in which the Spirit is brought before us here in His action; and again, how saints, unquestionable saints, having unquestionable power in the Spirit of God, may after all, through not having the Lord before their eyes, wholly miss the will of God.

What a lively picture it gives us, first of all, of the fact that the Spirit of God is come down to serve! His action might be all perverted, but still He was there. He did not withhold these powers, because they were misused. This is a solemn thought, not only fall of comfort in what is good, but extremely humbling as to what is evil.

And now, on what does this wonderful fact rest, that the Holy Ghost is here, and abides with us, and this forever? Not because the saints deserve it; but because of Christ and Christ's redemption. This is the reason why no dark ways of men, no break-up of the church, drove Him away. The Spirit of God abode on and on; and will abide until the church is completed. Therefore it is in vain for persons to say, “Where are those powers now?” This is not the true question, but the presence of the Spirit Himself. Only you will observe, when they had those powers, there might be and was the greatest confusion. And when those powers are no longer displayed, what then? Unbelief comes in to destroy all, and would ignore the greater truth of the presence of the Spirit in the church, because these powers are not in exercise.

I ask you, beloved friends, can you say that God has taught you this truth; or are you indifferent about it? Is the presence of the Spirit that which brings you together to honor, as Lord, Jesus who died for you? How sad to say that it does not seem in many cases as if it were; for I am afraid that some of God's children, who can not plead sickness or other lawful hindrances, allow themselves just the Lord's supper, and little more, and so fail to magnify the Lord in His will and ways, and foreclose their own blessing immensely. If it were a question of persons who could not attend, or of those who had no other opportunity, it would be indeed worthy of love and respect for such souls to bear quietly privation and consequent loss. But I cannot but say that it is a pain where one sees brethren who only put in an appearance on Lord's day morning—just keeping within the verge of that which entitles them to retain their place in name, and no more. Precious as is the Supper of the Lord, when partaken of in the fellowship of saints, and according to the word of God, if it alas! forms not only the staple but the whole of one's Christian service and worship in public at least, it seems to be only another form of Ritualism. The Lord does not deserve this at our hands; nor would He receive it from such as feel Who it is that is waiting to bless us when we meet together. And is the Lord there only when we break bread? Is it then alone that we are gathered to His name? Is He not there when we come together to join in prayer? Have we no worship to offer? Or do we suppose that, because we do not take part actively, He has no claim and we have no privilege there?

It is indeed great forgetfulness of God, and of His working in all; for He acts not only in the great gifts, but, as we have it in Ephesians, by what “every joint supplieth.” It is not a question of chief men only, but of what every one owes the rest. Surely, my brethren, whatever may be the humble place that a saint of God has in the body of Christ, he has that place which is given him by God therein for His glory. If scripture is believed, you cannot deny that the church is a reality here; and if it be so, then there is not a joint in that body but what is meant, not merely to receive, but to supply, good. No doubt, one main source of our weakness lies in the little faith that each saint has in the importance of his supply to all the others. God is not working in the spiritual body or in the natural one, quite independently of the state and condition of the particular members. The body of Christ is a living whole, and should be intelligent too. In the house of God the Spirit dwells and acts. Is He not the “Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind?” and is this true of those only whose voice is heard in the meetings of the saints? Is it not true of every one in whom He dwells, of each saint that is a constituent part of Christ's body, as every saint is?

Let us have more faith, then, in what God has written for the common blessing of all, and more confidence; in the Lord's using those that may be little or weak. Their presence is a fact, and still more the action of the Spirit on the new man, when they are thus present, Our place is not

to criticize, nor to be displeased at this or that, to indulge in partisanship any more than in what would equally grieve the Spirit; for either way we should be coming together for the worse and not for the better. When souls have the certainty of God being there, and that we are each forming a part of that which glorifies Him, what a difference it makes! How is it so? Because in love we then seek the edification of all; and, I may remark, that it is not only what is said, or what is prayed, but the tone of all, too, which has much to do with the blessing, the spirit in which we are together. Is it so, that when assembled we really are found in the truth of what we are thus met for—our souls going out in prayer, worship, or whatever it may be? Inasmuch as it is a divine person that is present with us, He knows all hearts, and we need to look well to it how far we are hindering or helping on the object for which He is here and we come together—the glory of Christ.

But as the Corinthians were childish in this matter of the tongues, the apostle rebukes them sharply, and demands (verse 7) what the effect would be if all were a jargon of sound; using figures to convict them of the folly of that which was practically a mere jumble of undistinguishable sounds. That the speaker should be understood is pressed in repeated forms (vers. 11-17). Not that the apostle did not speak with more tongues than any of them; but in the assembly he had rather speak five words with his understanding, that he might teach others, than ten thousand words in a tongue (vers. 18, 19). He brings it down to this point (ver. 20), that they were only infants as yet. “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye babes, but in understanding be men.”

Whether it be individually or as an assembly, the end for which God has redeemed us is His own glory, and the way in which He forms us for that glory now is through One Who is here with us on Whom we are called to lean, Whose work and delight it is to exalt and commend Jesus. He has sent the Spirit on Whose action we are called to count, no matter what the difficulty may be.

Take a case of discipline: I mention this, because you are familiar with it. How would it show itself in the assembly as contrasted with the ways of men, or with a company even of God's children acting on human grounds? At best they would try to settle it, after the facts had been brought before them, by a majority, or show of votes. This is man's mode. He knows no better, because the available way is by the men who are there, the individuals whose business it is to judge. How acts faith in the presence of God, by His Spirit—how would this govern such a matter? The case is brought before the assembly. There may be a difference in the minds of those present. The facts are stated. There prevails the sense before a word is said that there is something lacking. Dead silence follows. A brother rises (for God would not have us depart from the order of His assembly; there may be sisters who know the facts and have a spiritual judgment as truly as men, but they do not violate the order of God), who states that he feels a difficulty, and he suggests that it would be well to inquire, waiting on God a little longer. The assembly bows. Discipline is a thing that may not be forced, unless indeed people are reckless of division or wish it. It is not a question of mere unanimity, but rather of God giving an intelligent conviction to the assembly. Accordingly there is a pause in the proceedings. The case is examined a little more fully. The point of doubt is looked into. The Lord does not refuse His light. Facts are brought forward again: during the pause the truth is brought forth convincingly. The doubt whether the case was adequately known, whether the sin under judgment was as grave as it appeared, is entirely removed. The facts are plain, as is scripture; no doubt remains any longer on the mind of any spiritual person; and discipline is either uncalled for, or it must take its course according to the Lord's sentence in His word.

The church of God is entitled, by virtue of Him Who is in it, to look for divine light; not to act in the dark, but to wait on God with the certainty of learning His mind about us. Now, I do not deny that there may be in certain cases a mistake, but then there is always an intelligible ground for seeing how the mistake has been made. The assembly might act hastily, and this very thing would convict it; for supposing you show that in an extreme case of discipline they have been too ready to act without due testimony, no wonder they have not had the guidance of the Lord. For it is a plain scriptural principle that “in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” It is an exceedingly humiliating thing when an assembly has to acknowledge that it has acted wrongly; for the very fact of our being so gathered together is meant, as far as means can go, to correct extravagance and supply what may be lacking in mere individuals. When really subject to the Lord, all is sure.

We are entitled, I say, to look for the guidance of God; but one quite admits there may be such a thing as mistaken acts. The assembly is no more infallible than an individual Christian. For what makes the assembly to be that of God is not merely that they are Christians, but that His presence is vouchsafed there—God present and left free to act by His own word. And this is the ground on which we should look for guidance. But then the same thing is true of an individual. He has God's presence in him, but does this make him infallible? The truth is, there is no such thing as infallibility except in God Himself; but we must also hold, that, just as an individual waits upon God, he is proportionately guided; and, of course, so far as the assembly depend on God, they enjoy the same gracious guidance. But there is no ground for anything like pretentiousness, or the notion that there cannot be a mistake through haste, on the part of the one or the other, though it would be less likely in the assembly. We have to pray that, if even gracious answers expose over-confidence, there one might be made watchful; as, on the contrary, we should bear in mind that just because God's grace has put us into the place of His church, it is in that place that. Satan is peculiarly anxious to lower, pervert, and dishonor the name of the Lord Jesus by our means.

(Continued from page 281) (To be continued, D.V.)

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 14:26-40, Notes on

The apostle now comes to the practical deductions from the divine principles laid down for regulating the assembly. The Corinthians had assumed absolute openness or really license for human will from the fact of the powers distributed to one and another by the Spirit. To control a meeting where He wrought thus seemed unreasonable. But here they were wholly mistaken; for the blessed One who is now gent down from heaven is a Spirit of order, and works in love for the purpose of maintaining the Lordship of Christ. Hence no power at work in or by man exempts from the rule of the Lord, but on the contrary exalts it, if exercised according to the will of God.

“What is it then, brethren? Whenever ye come together, each of you1 hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edification. If any one speak with a tongue, [let it be] two or at the most three, and in turn, and let one interpret; but if there be no interpreter, let him be silent in an assembly, and let him speak to himself and to God. And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others discern; but if there be a revelation to another while sitting, let the first be silent; for ye can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all be exhorted. And spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. For God is not [a God] of confusion but of peace, as in all the assemblies of the saints.” (Ver. 26-83.)

Such was the restless desire of contributing each his part, not of general edification by whomsoever the Lord might deign to employ. Indeed they were thinking of themselves, not of Him nor of each other in love. Still none can deny to the assembly the fullest liberty: else it could not have been thus abused. Modern arrangements exclude not the abuse only but that liberty which ought to be; and in fact, where the Spirit of the Lord is, liberty is characteristic of His presence individually or collectively, and in the assembly it is marked according to scripture. Not that such as Neander in the least understood this, who founded it on the priesthood of all Christians, which is a wholly different relation concerning the saints in their freedom of access to God. Here it is a question of His assembly wherein the Holy Spirit acts by the members as He will to glorify the Lord and edify the saints. Hence power is subordinated to the Lord's authority, the vessel of divine energy is made to feel responsibility in its use, and the vital principle of obedience is preserved intact. Thus is God in all things glorified through Jesus Christ, as says the great apostle of the circumcision, when exhorting that each should use the gift which he had received as a good steward of God's manifold grace.

The apostle then limits speaking in a tongue to two or at most three on the same occasion, in turn, and then only in case of one to interpret. So it was to be even with prophesying, where the others2 were to judge or discern, instead of one interpreting. Prophesying was of all gifts the most precious and suited to build up or otherwise act on the saints and even those outside for good; but there must not be an excess even of the best thing, for God is jealous for the blessing of His saints, and thinks of the weakest in the assembly who might be distracted, not edified, by more than three. Should a revelation be made to one sitting by, he could speak, the other being silent, for a revelation when thus given took precedence of all communication. There was room indeed for all to prophesy for the instruction and stirring up of all, but one by one. Power must not set order aside: spirits of prophets are subject to prophets, instead of all being an uncontrollable impulse. It was not with the working of the Holy Spirit as with demon power; and this because God is not the source of confusion but of peace, as in all the assemblies of the saints, where order was peculiarly due to His character as present. Excitement and tumult, even in the exercise of divinely given energy, dishonor Him, the spring and giver of peace.

It is not quite certain whether we should connect the last clause with verse 33 as its close, or with verse 34 as its beginning. Many critics and commentators prefer the latter. There is no doubt that Lachmann was wrong in punctuating the Greek, so as to make “of the saints” the complement, not of the assemblies to which it unquestionably belongs, but to “the women,” , being of course omitted on the authority of the three greatest uncials, six cursives, most of the ancient versions, and of early citations. But safer editors, like Tischendorf, who also omit , separate , “the women” from , “of the saints.” To begin with such a phrase is unexampled. “Let the women be silent in the assemblies; for it is not permitted to them to speak, but let them be in subjection3 as also the law saith. But if they wish to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in an assembly.” (Ver. 34, 85.)

This rule is of great moment. Women are forbidden to speak in the assemblies. It might have been supposed by those who love to reason that there if anywhere they might be allowed. The holy atmosphere, where man is as nothing, where God makes His presence and power known spiritually, might have seemed a fitting place for holy women to speak, who undoubtedly might have gifts, even that of prophesying like the four daughters of Philip the evangelist. (Acts 21:9.) But no; the apostle was inspired to forbid it in the assemblies, of course not absolutely, for every gift is meant to be exercised, but the manner must be in submission to the Lord's direction. Divine revelation in the Old Testament gave clear intimation of woman's place generally in subjection: the New Testament is no less peremptory as to the assemblies. The notion of their standing forth in proclamation of the gospel crossed no mind in those days. This was a violation of female propriety, which would have shocked even the heathen. It was reserved for the corruption of the best thing, for the innovating spirit and ways of modern Christendom. The apostle forbade their even asking a question on these public occasions. If they wish to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in an assembly.

The entire subject is wound up by the demand whether the word of God set out to them or reached to them only. The Corinthians were the first to depart from the apostolic order established everywhere. It was the beginning of ecclesiastical revolt. The church is to be subject. The word of God commands, and commands all assemblies alike.

“What, did the word of God go out from you, or reached it unto you alone? If any one seemeth to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge the things which I write to you, that they are [the] 4Lord's commandment.5 But if any one be ignorant, let him be ignorant.6: Wherefore, my7 brethren, seek earnestly for prophesying, and forbid not the speaking in 8 the tongues;9 but let all things be done becomingly and in order.” (Ver. 80-40.)

The assembly is bound to maintain the truth, and, whilst bearing with want of intelligence (for we all know but in part), to sanction no error. The assembly is bound to walk in holiness to the Lord, as becomes those called from darkness into His marvelous light. But the assembly is taught; it cannot and ought not to teach, but to accept those whom the Lord sends to teach. The assembly is called to act in receiving and putting away, in both subject to the Lord and His word; but rule properly is in the hands of those so gifted of God, just as preaching, teaching, or any other service. It is the Lord who gives; it is the Lord who commands, as we see here, in the authoritative injunction of His apostle. The word of God comes to the saints, and it comes to them all. Differing views may be found, alas! like every other failure; but the assemblies are surely to seek to walk in the fellowship of His mind and will. Different circumstances may modify in matters of detail, yet more in appearance than reality; while, in matters which concern not only vital truth but godly order as here, scripture leaves no justifiable ground for dissent again, to be gifted with special insight into God's mind, or to reap the fruit of this in spirituality, if real, would only deepen the sense of the Lord's authority and the imperativeness of obedience. We see the perfection of this in Christ Himself here below. Let power of the Spirit then be shown in the recognition of His commandment Does any one refuse subjection on the score of ignorance? Then let him keep the place of ignorance and not pretend to teach. Those who wish to guide others should know what is, and what is not, of the Lord. It is really a question of will in those who do not see; for His injunction fails not in power to reach the conscience. To reason further would be to indulge will and strengthen, beside possible harm to one's own soul. The refractory are best left in His hands whose words they cavil at: if His own, He knows how to break them down and make them thankful for the light, the refusal of which keeps them in ignorance.

The conclusion the apostle then shuts up the brethren to is, zeal for prophesying, and no prohibition of speaking with tongues, regulated as we have seen in the assemblies. For all things, not these merely, are to be done becomingly and in order. But the Spirit alone can give us to discern always what is comely, and the order is not left to human discretion, but revealed by the Lord. Thus man's will, as it is condemned in every detail of individual life (for we are sanctified to obedience, yea, to the same kind of obedience as our Lord Jesus Christ), is no less excluded from the assembly of God which He has formed for the glory of Christ, and in which He acts by the Holy Ghost according to the written word.

Edification, then, is rule absolute for what is said in the assembly. No matter how astonishing may be the exhibition of divine power answering to the name of Jesus, if it edify not, it has no rightful place there. For love edifies, as knowledge puffs up, and power startles or stuns; and as God is love, so the assembly is the suited sphere for the exercise of this, the energy of His own nature. The children partake of His nature, for he who loves is born of God, and knows God. To keep up the exercise and testimony of this is of all moment; as it is to hinder what would give loose reins to the flesh, under cover of displaying the mighty effects of Christ's victory. Hence the regulation that follows “Wherefore let him that speaketh with a tongue pray that he may interpret.” (Ver. 13.) But the apostle proceeds to give reasons, and this, as his manner was, by application to his own case: “For if I pray with a tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray also with the understanding; I will sing with the spirit, but I will sing also with the understanding. Since if thou bless in spirit, how shall he that filleth the place of the private person say Amen at thy thanksgiving, since he knoweth not what thou sayest? For thou givest thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank God, I speak in a tongue more than you all; but in an assembly I desire to speak five words with my understanding, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.” (Vers. 14-19.)

Thus the rule of love is still further enforced and maintained. Praying in a tongue is excluded on this principle as decidedly as any other kind of speaking in a tongue. And it is evidently the strongest case as being an address to God, who of course understood all, and conclusive against prayer in any unknown tongue. Communion is the joy of the assembly; at the least edification is indispensable. What cannot be understood by the assembly as such has no claim to be heard there, unless there were interpretation directly or indirectly.

But we see also that prayer, singing, blessing, thanksgiving, as well as prophesying, had their full place in the assembly. They are all to edification; and who could forbid any of them? Power is insufficient, however manifestly divine. What is with the understanding, and consequently addresses it, has the greatest weight with the apostle, as thus speaking authoritatively for the Lord; and this is as true of prayers and hymns as of teaching. The least in the assembly is presumed to go intelligently with the praise or thanksgiving that rises up to God.

Indeed fellowship is the aim of the Holy Spirit in all church action; and hence the all-importance of His guidance into the will of the Lord, which alone is entitled to govern all the saints, and into such worship as renewed hearts can feel and join in spontaneously. Influence and effort are alien and unseasonable, as they are human. The assembly is of God, with One there perfectly adequate to work in all hearts to the glory of the Lord Jesus; and the new man the apostle would have to do, say, and hear all intelligently. The day of vague emblems is past; ecstatic utterances, mighty effects, may have their scope elsewhere; but in the assembly there ought to be the exercise of the understanding. It is called to be “fruitful;” so that he who holds no public place ( ) may be able to go along with what is said. To be intelligible, so as to edify, is requisite in the assembly. It is evident, from Eph. 5 and Colossians that the Christians of that early day had psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, quite distinct from those God inspired by David and others for His ancient people. Not a word implies that what was sung in the assembly of God was either a Jewish psalm or of New Testament inspiration. They were therefore, I presume, substantially such as Christians in our day, and in all days, are wont to use. Only they sought the Lord's guidance, and the fellowship of all, on these solemn public occasions. Our chapter is of importance in proving that they sung in the assembly; as the other epistles referred to, as well as James, prove the use of hymns in private or alone. Of course the power of the Spirit was sought in both; as He indeed dwells in the individual Christian no less than in the assembly. The apostle is careful to intimate that there was not the least reason on his part for jealousy of others speaking in a tongue; for he himself was gifted in this way more than them all. But in the assembly to speak five words with the understanding was to him more desirable than ever so many in a tongue; and this, because his heart was set on instructing others also. It is love which should animate, not self-pleasing; and love works with a view to edification. Hence the grave and wise exhortation that follows, not without reproof.

“Brethren, be not children in mind, but in malice be infants; but in mind be of full age. In the law it is written, By men of other tongues, and by lips of others,1 will I speak to this people; and not even thus will they listen to me, saith Jehovah. Wherefore the tongues are for a sign, not to those that believe, but to the unfaithful, while prophecy [is] not to the unfaithful, but to those that believe. If therefore the whole church come together unto the same place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in simple or unfaithful [persons], will they not say that ye are mad? But if all prophesy, and some unfaithful or simple one, come in, he is convicted by all, he is judged by all;2 the secrets of his heart become manifest; and thus3 falling on [his] face he will do homage to God, reporting that indeed God is among you.” (Vers. 20-25.)

Thus the apostle as a father again admonishes his beloved children that they should eschew the trifling natural to the young, the disposition to be occupied with some new thing of slight moment in itself, but apt to tend to mischief, as their fondness for and misuse of tongues in the assembly hindered a due estimate of prophesying, the weightiest of all gifts for such an occasion. But he would have them to cherish with the artlessness of a babe the understanding of riper years. And he cites freely from Isa. 28:11, 12, so as to convey a wholesome inference for the Corinthian saints. For God is there warning the Jews, dull to hearken to His prophets, that He would speak to them with the stammering lips of foreigners. Such a tongue speaking to Israel was a sign of their humiliation, and of God's judgment. What perversity, then, for the saints in Corinth to turn from God, speaking in prophecy for their edification, to tongues which they could not understand! to find their pleasure as Christians in what was God's solemn threat to His ancient people because of their unheeding refractoriness! The apostle, neither here nor anywhere, despises a tongue in its own place and season, used as a sign for unbelievers as God intended it. The unintelligent and unloving mistake was introducing it among believers, who could not profit by it. Divine gift as it was, its possession constituted no license to exercise it apart from the end of the Lord, who gave it in His grace and for His glory, and with His will now expressed to control its use.

The common English version needlessly introduces “serveth” in the latter half of verse 22. I think, however, that it is justified in not understanding “sign” with prophesying, which essentially differs from those powers correctly falling under that designation, like a tongue or a miracle. It was this, no doubt, which influenced them in changing the “to” of the former clause into the “for” of the latter, which reads more smoothly in English. But the change seems scarcely called for, and is not here adopted. We could equally well say tongues are as a sign for the unbelieving, prophesying for those that believe.

But the apostle is not content with this withering application of the Jewish prophet; he both exposes the folly of their conduct, and lays down the right aim in the assembly. On the one hand he puts the case of their all speaking with tongues in full assembly, and this in presence of

simple persons or unbelievers. What must be the impression produced? That the saints were mad. On the other hand, if all were to prophesy, how would such an one feel if he came in and heard? In the discovery to himself of his heart's secrets, divinely dealt with by them all, the profoundest conviction that God is truly among the saints. So, when the woman of Samaria had her life set out in a few words by One who had never met her before, she confessed, “Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.” By His words she could not but feel and own that all was out, and God was speaking to her conscience.

This is the characteristic of prophesying, not the announcement of the good news as in evangelizing, nor the unfolding of doctrine as in teaching, but God by His word dealing with the soul consciously. Such, in this hypothetical case, would be the conviction irresistibly brought home by all prophesying, and such the report made, as well as the homage rendered at the moment. It is supposed to be the effect, not of one preaching in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, but of God's presence in His saints thus prophesying in the assembly. The apostle does not describe it as a fact that ever did take place, but—as the natural effect under the circumstances,

How solemn that there is no such “assembly” now found, or even essayed, in the so-called “churches"! How blessed that ever so few have faith in His word and Spirit, who alone can make it good in the measure of their dependence upon Him! It is in the Spirit that we wait on the Lord, the central object of faith to the assembly gathered to His name. That the two or three who thus meet have “little strength” is most true; that they have deep reason to humble themselves is no less true; but they have the deepest and unfailing reason to praise Him for His faithfulness as they keep His word and deny not His name. Those who forsake or despise such assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of most is now-a-days, are scarcely entitled to speak. Unbelief or unfaithfulness should at least be silent. What can be worse than to invent plausible appearances to cover sin and shame?

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 14:1-12, Notes on

Here we come to the application of love. Blessed as is always and everywhere this energy of the new nature, it is in the assembly of God that it finds its largest and deepest exercise, so far as we are concerned. Nowhere else is it demanded so continually, and in such varied forms. Without love souls therein make speedy and utter shipwreck; with it the sorest trials turn into, the happiest testimony to the grace of Christ.

But hitherto the saints in Corinth had failed to learn it. They were far from the simple freshness of the Thessalonians, to whom the apostle could say some years before that they needed not that he should write, for they themselves were taught of God to love one another. Nevertheless he besought even them that they should increase more and more, as indeed (we learn from his second epistle) they did. At Corinth the failure was great, and not in private only but in public, as even shown on the solemn occasions when the assembly came together to celebrate the Lord's supper and to exercise their spiritual gifts. Hence the exhortation that follows.

"Pursue love, but earnestly desire the spiritual things, yet rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not to men but to God; for no one heareth; yet in spirit he speaketh mysteries. But he that prophesieth speaketh to men edification and encouragement and comfort.” (Vers. 1-3.)

Love, then, should be the main and constant object; but there were spiritual manifestations which had a place only subordinate to love, for the Holy Spirit, in giving and working thus, was glorifying the Lord Jesus. Among these prophesying has the chief place, the superiority of which over such a sign-gift as speaking in a tongue, the apostle rules, is proved by this, that such a speaker speaks not to men but to God, for none hears or understands while in spirit he speaks mysteries; whereas he that prophesies speaks to men edification and encouragement and comfort.

Assuredly the apostolic test is not always appreciated, and there are those in our day as indifferent to edification as the Corinthians. But a greater than they did not regard as a defect in spiritual tone the desire that men should be refreshed or helped in whatever way they needed. No doubt those who spoke in a tongue argued that they stood for the rights of Christ, who was glorified in the gift, and that theirs was the divine side—they spoke to God. But the apostle boldly maintains that the lack of speaking to men demonstrates the inferiority of speaking in a tongue to prophesying. He that so speaks is not taxed with speaking unintelligibly, or unintelligible things; on the contrary he is presumed to speak the truth, and high truth— “in spirit he speaketh mysteries.” But, the language being unknown, “no one heareth;” he is—not understood. He that prophesies speaks to men edification, encouragement, and comfort. The testimony flows in blessing to souls. The apostle was not dazzled, as the Corinthians were then and many since, in their yearnings after it, with the display of power. But he unqualifiedly sets prophesying beyond such a display, for it brings in not power merely but God, and God in His building up souls, encouraging them, and consoling them. This does not cast such a halo around man, but it really brings in God in grace, and gives the consciousness of His presence.

We must remember, however, that verse 3 is not a definition of prophesying, but its contrast with speaking in a tongue. Prophesying, again, has no necessary connection with the future, as some suppose, nor is it preaching or teaching in general. It is forth telling rather than foretelling. It is so speaking to man as to put him in the light of God—of God's dealing with his heart and conscience. It gives His mind.

Hence the apostle proceeds to say (ver. 4) that he that speaketh in a tongue edifieth himself, but he that prophesieth edifieth the assembly. Here again the mistake of the Corinthians was exposed, and the grace and wisdom of the apostle evident.

Still more hoes the largeness of his heart come out in verse 5. “But I wish that ye all should speak with tongues, but rather that ye should prophesy. And greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, in order that the assembly may receive edification.” Such is his continual test. It was near the faithful servant's heart, as it was in his Master's. What astonishes is for the spiritual mind far less than what edifies. This he enters into a little more minutely in verse 6. “But now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, unless I shall speak to you either in revelation, or in knowledge, or in prophecy, or [in] doctrine?” It was not therefore that the apostle slighted the gift of tongues. How could he, seeing it was a manifestation of the Spirit promised of the Lord Jesus—a mighty testimony to the grace of God from the day of Pentecost find onwards? Still the less showy gift of prophesying has a far higher character in and for the assembly. The error he corrects lay in the misapprehension and misuse of the Corinthians. Had their eye been single, they had been full of light; but it was not so, and hence their unspiritual judgment, as well as conduct, draws out the instruction of the Lord. It is important also to observe how it is insisted on that all done in the assembly should be done in the Spirit. For the idea is not that he who

spoke in the tongue did not understand what he said, yet it is never supposed that he would communicate, unless he had the interpretation of tongues. But his own knowledge of what was spoken is not the same as this interpretation, and unless he could interpret, there is no thought of his communicating to the assembly what was said in a tongue. For the assembly is the sphere, not for man's ability, but for the Spirit of God. Interpretation must therefore be a gift, not a human power, to be available there.

It may be remarked also that revelation and knowledge seem to correspond in general with prophesying and teaching respectively. It is not meant that they are identical, but that they more or less correspond. They are the great means of edifying the assembly, not speaking in a tongue, unless the gift of interpretation accompanied it. To profit souls one must come thus. Indeed the apostle appeals to themselves whether it was not so.

Next he adduces the case of musical instruments to confirm the point. The sounds must be distinguished and understood in order to the wished for result. “Nevertheless lifeless things giving sound, whether pipe or harp, if they give not distinction to the notes, how shall be known what is piped or what is harped?” (Ver. 7.) Now we do not distinguish the sounds of a language we do not know. The truths conveyed may be ever so weighty, but an unknown language is but a confused jargon. Nor is this the only illustration given. “For also if a trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare for war?” (Ver. 8.) The trumpet-call must be understood in short. “So also ye through the tongue, unless ye give a distinct speech, how shall what is spoken be known, for ye will be speaking into air?” Distinctness, so as to be understood, is the point pressed; not exactly easy to be understood, but distinct speech, so as to be intelligible: otherwise all is lost for the hearers.

“There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none insignificant. If therefore I do not know the power of the voice, I shall be to him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh a barbarian in my case. So also ye, since ye are zealous after spirits, seek that ye may abound for the edification of the assembly.” To be understood then is essential to edification. No matter how excellent the matter conveyed by the unknown language, it has no claim to be said to the assembly, unless it be duly interpreted. It is foreign there, even more out of place than a colloquy with a barbarian or foreigner. If they really were in earnest for the power of the Spirit in their midst, why did not they seek to abound for the building up one another? This were divine love, not vain display, but worthy of Christ and His saints. It is flesh that likes distinction for itself, not the service of the Lord for the good of others, where God deigns to deal with souls.

The Body, the Church, Body, the Church, The: 4

Col. 1:18

The unity of the church as Christ's body will surely be displayed perfectly for the administration of the fullness of seasons, when God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. But does not this scripture teach, that the church, if for the time on earth to itself as the heavenly witness of the grace of God, will then form part of a common system? I answer, that the passage seems, on the contrary, to keep distinct the church in her own peculiar and pre-eminent seat of the affection and glory of Christ. For, first, the apostle speaks of the heavenly things and the earthly things being headed up in Christ, which is deduced in Col. 1:15, 16, from His claims as Creator, though asserted by Him as the Firstborn of every creature; in which latter text we have His supremacy affirmed by right of creation over all things that are in heaven and that are on earth. Next, it is added, “In whom [Christ] also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the praise of His glory who have pre-trusted in Christ: in whom ye also,” etc.

Just so we may observe, after the statement of His headship over all things, the Epistle to the Colossians turns to another headship, “And He is the head of the body, the church: the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence.” Neither heavenly things nor earthly things are the church, though they are to be the inheritance she shares who is coheir with Christ. God “hath put all things under His feet, and given Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body.” Instead of being included in “all things under His feet,” she enjoys and participates in His supremacy over all by virtue of being one with Him. Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, she looks for an inheritance such as becomes Him Who has purchased it, and Him Who is its earnest; such as becomes (may we not add?) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, “to whom be glory in the church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.” See also Rev. 21:2, 3.

But although it is for “the administration of the fullness of seasons” that the glory of Christ, shared by the church as His bride, will be revealed, so that the world itself shall know it, yet was there a testimony to it, produced and manifested by the power of the Holy Ghost in the one body on earth. When the apostle spoke of the saints being “builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit,” was this unity a thing ideal, future, and only to be achieved in heaven? Or was it not an actual present fact made good here below by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven? Is it not true that “now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God?” And the unity of the Spirit, which the saints should be diligent to keep, where was it if not on earth? Will the saints in heaven use their diligence to keep it there? Again, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers given of Christ (Himself ascended up far above all heavens), where were they, and where still are the gifts of Christ? Where and to what end is exercised the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ? Does the perfecting (Kai-aprKrp.Os) of the saints, does the work of the ministry, does the edifying of the body of Christ, find their sphere in heaven? Is it there that we are in danger of being tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of men's doctrine? Is it not on earth that we meet with “sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait—to deceive?” Is it not here that we “grow up unto him in all things, who is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Ephes. 4)? It was here, in the church, that each joint of supply wrought, contributing nourishment to the whole: it was here, according to the effectual working in the measure of each one part, that the body made increase. It is in this world, and in this world only, that “all the body, by joints and bands having nourishment administered and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God;” as it is assuredly here that the Spirit would have the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts, to the which also we were called in one body (Col. 2,3)

In writing to the saints at Rome (chap. 12.), hitherto never seen by the apostle, and therefore in man's judgment at least connected in no peculiar way with him, as was the case too with regard to the Colossians, it is just the same: “As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same function; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Evidently it is not

a tie which was going to be established, but a relationship then and really existent. Membership is not with a local church but with the body of Christ; though, on the other hand, if one be not in fellowship with the assembly of Christ's members where one resides, there can be for such no fellowship with them anywhere else at the same time.

Nor can language be more explicit than that of 1 Cor. 12. “But all these worketh the one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of the body being many are one body; so also is the Christ. For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and were all given to drink of one Spirit” (ver. 13). The composition of that one body depends upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost. By Him are we baptized into the body of Christ, Jews, Gentiles, bond or free; it matters not. The great fact is, that Jesus exercised His heavenly rights.

He baptized with the Holy Ghost; and they who were thus baptized became the immediate and the especial field of His presence and operations, the body of Christ, the body subsisting on earth, and acted on by the Spirit when the apostle wrote.

The diversities of gifts, of administrations, and of operations, will not be in heaven. Their province is the church on earth. It is here that the manifestation is given to every man (i.e., in the church) to profit withal. If any reasonable doubt could be harbored about the word of wisdom to one, the word of knowledge to another, and faith to a third, there can be no question in the believer's mind, that the gifts of healing, the working of miracles, divers kinds of tongues, and their interpretation, are not prospectively for heaven but for earth now. It is the one and selfsame Spirit Who energized all these, distributing to each. For the many members constitute but one body; “by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body.”

The importance of these last words will be better estimated on comparing with them Acts 1:4, 5; and particularly the clause, “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” At the time the disciples were believers. They had life, and life more abundantly, we may say. Jesus, the quickening Spirit, had breathed upon them and said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost,” etc. He had also opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. But none of these things is the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Pentecost first beheld the accomplishment of the promise of the Father. Then, and not before, were believers baptized with the Spirit. But it is this baptism which introduces into, and forms, the one body; it is the Spirit, thus present and baptizing, Who began and organizes, as He recruits the body of Christ. Hence is it, that coincident with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, we first hear in the word of God of this new body, and of membership therein. Whatever the privileges (and there were many) which existed before, that which is distinctively called in the Bible the church of God appeared here below, as the consequence of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, dwelling in the disciples, and baptizing them, Jews or Gentiles, into one body, of which the ascended Christ is the Head. The church, His body, derived its being from His presence in heaven as the glorified Man, and from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit on earth.

“But, as it is, God set the members every one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. And if they all were one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. [And] the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; and those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness while our comely parts have no need. But God tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to the [part] which lacked, that there might be no schism in the body; but that the members might have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with [it]; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with [it]. Now ye are Christ's body and members in particular.” 1 Cor. 12:18-27.

When Christ's members are together in heaven, our mortal body changed, fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself, will any “seem to be more feeble?” Shall we think any to be “less honorable” there, and, “upon these bestow more abundant honor?” That this is a present care, flowing out of the sense God gives us of the exigencies and of the preciousness of Christ's body here below, is exactly what I am contending for. Does any one believe that such will be our employment when Christ presents the church to Himself glorious, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing? But if not, these members were members of the body then on earth, for God had tempered the body together, “having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked, that there might be no schism in the body (in heaven there is no danger of schism); but that the members might have the same care one for another.” “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it: or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it,” this is clearly not in heaven, but on earth. “Now ye are Christ's body and members in particular:” where and when is this? Surely then on earth. Heaven is not in question. It was a subsisting fact here, though in the spiritual sphere, and fraught with blessing and responsibility of the utmost importance to Christ's glory for every one of His members.

“And God did set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” Manifestly, these are gifts in the church—the whole church on earth. The apostle addresses, no doubt, the church of God that was at Corinth; while it is very clear that the New Testament frequently speaks of assemblies in this or that locality, that is, churches (compare Rom. 15:1, 5; Gal. 1:2, 22; Col. 4:15, 16; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:14, etc.). But, besides this which is not disputed, as well as the application of the term in Heb. 12:23 to the congregation of the firstborn which are written in heaven viewed as a completed thing, however anticipative faith might say, “Ye have come” to it, even as to the other components of the glory—besides in short the local and the future senses, 1 Cor. 12:28 is clearly another sense of the most important bearing, as may be seen in the Epistles of Paul: the church, as a body here below, in a breadth as extensive as the baptism of the Spirit. That entire society or corporation, wherein He dwelt and wrought, was the church in which God set apostles prophets, teachers, etc. Certainly it is impossible to say that He had set all these in the Corinthian assembly; nor will it be maintained that He is to set them in the church universal gathered on high.

There is, then, another and large sense of “the church,” in which unity is predicated of all the members of Christ existing at one time in the world, whatever might be the distance separating their bodies; and that in virtue of one Spirit baptizing them into one body. The body of Christ, like the natural one, is susceptible of increase, as scripture plainly indicates. But as in the natural body the identity subsists when the old particles have given place to new, so the body of Christ is the body still, whatever the changes in the members particularly. He Who, by His presence, imparted unity at its beginning, conserves unity by His own faithful presence. He was given to abide with the disciples forever.

In fine, by “the church” is meant not a junction of various co-ordinate (much less conflicting) societies but a body, the one body of Christ, possessing the same privileges and call, and responsibility on earth, and looking for the same glory in heaven as the Bride of Christ. If a man

were baptized by the Spirit, he was thereby constituted a member of the church; if he had a gift, it was to be exercised according to the proportion of faith for the good of the whole: not ministry, not membership, pertaining to a church but to the church; each joint belonging to the entire body, and the entire body to each joint (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 3, 12, 14; Eph. 1, 4; Col. 2; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 22:17). If it be God's truth, it is for the believer to act on, to walk, serve, and worship in. Divine truth without corresponding faithfulness is the shame and condemnation of him who merely owns it. “If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them.”

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But what a different thing is unity in the mind of God—how wholly distinct the oneness of the church according to scripture! For there we do not see “One Spirit” and many bodies, even if they had a similar polity, but one Spirit and one body. And what a blessed thing to know, beloved friends, that this unity is ours, and that it is ours not in an exclusive but in an inclusive sense—that the unity of which we remind one another, as to which we need continually to rebuke our narrow hearts, is that which we maintain for all that are His! It is not a strange place that we wish to compel the saints into; nor is it something which we crave as an object near to our hearts in a selfish way, and therefore cry it up. No! our one motive is that it is the truth, this unity of the Spirit according to the will of God. It is a relationship, and this in grace, which our God has established by the presence of His Spirit for all that are His on earth, the great effort of the devil being to hinder its manifestation, to destroy the sense of it, and consequently, all just action upon it in the minds and ways of God's saints. For I press it, that not merely is it a question of the world coming in, but the more solemn thought that God's saints have lost even the true notion of unity. Consequently, when most look at the various societies that are existing around them, there may be feeling of complacency, not of shame and sorrow for the Lord's injured name. But even if they grieve, let them rise and do the will of the Lord themselves without waiting for others; especially as to obey is better than sacrifice, and example gives the more force to precept. Why should they go on with what is unscriptural? Who asks this at their hands"? Certainly not the Lord.

The doctrine of chapter 12 is that “God has set some in the church, first apostles,” &c. (verse 28). That is, the Spirit of God blots out all the effects of man to arrange matters so as to avoid difficulties, and allow what he calls rights to be maintained, and best secured, as he thinks, against collision. Men have got the notion that there is no truth, but only “views” as to divine things; so that it is impossible where souls come freely together, that there should not be difficulty and danger. Granted; we all admit that. If we have the idea that, coming out and finding ourselves upon the ground of God's truth about the church, we shall not find difficulties but avoid all collision, we have certainly deceived ourselves. And, beloved friends, it is far better that we should be convinced of this from the beginning, and that we should remember that God never guaranteed to His assembly that there should not be trials thus to prove us. On the contrary, it is there I look for them, and they are sure even to abound; but then is that all? Is the church merely a number of godly persons who come together and who seek grace to bear with one another? Nay, it is God's dwelling-place; and is not God there He is verily, and displaying Himself, not by the cloud, as in the days of old, but by the Holy Ghost—as it is said, “The habitation of God through the Spirit.” The Holy Ghost has the same place now to us, as the cloud of glory had for Israel; and what was then only a visible though glorious sign is now a divine person in power. For if there be any person in the Godhead to whom it belongs to act in power, it is the Holy Ghost. Whatever may be the counsels of the Father, and whatever may be the work that the Son has done to give effect to those counsels, the Holy Ghost is always the agent that works them in man; and sent down from heaven has now taken this place. There is the secret of the unity. Who is it that is in the church, and what makes it to be the church of God? Not godly members merely, but in fact the Holy Ghost's presence. It is therefore a question of whether we really do believe in it, and whether we look for it. If we do, the consequence will be that our faith will be tried and put to the proof; but then we shall find that faith, however tried, is never disappointed. If we have brought in any latent unbelief, any thoughts natural to human kind, any expectations of our own, they, no doubt, will be disappointed; but this will be a blessing. It is good for us to be corrected of the Lord; and He has brought us where He can deal with us as One present with us, and acting for His own glory.

And as this is what chapter 12 sets before us, so, following it up, the apostle reminds the Corinthians that there was one thing even better than gifts. This was love. Hence, therefore, the place of chapter 13 Looking at God's nature, no doubt He is light; but what is the energy of that nature? It is love. It is this which actively comes to us from God and blesses us. As He has taken His place in the assembly, it is no question of His law for a people in the flesh who could not draw near, because God Himself is there. It is not put simply in the form of “grace.” Love is the energy of the divine nature, as grace its special way towards the evil with which it deals, and which it rises above. Thus love may be where there is no question of what it deals with, being the spring of what expresses the divine nature in its delight and activity in good. This is developed in the most blessed manner in chapter 13. It is what Christ showed to be in God; it is what the Spirit would now exercise in us.

It is impossible for the assembly of God to move healthfully or to enjoy happily the truth, unless the effect of truth is to free us from what hinders love—to judge all the roots of that which would impede the exercise of this divine principle. Hence, therefore, the apostle insists upon it that, whatever might be the value of prophecy, or knowledge, or any other gift, they all sooner or later depart. They are suited only to an imperfect condition, after all found necessarily here below. But love is not so; like Him who is its source, it abides and changes not. Nevertheless, the blessed fact is that love is also a present thing, and never more truly needed than now, as a holy spring of activity for the saint, as such, or in the church. This the apostle declares in the last verse of the chapter— “Now abideth faith, hope, and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

In coming to chapter 14, then, we have not the principle (this we had in ch. 12) nor the spring of power as in ch. 13, but the practice, the application, of the great truth. It is true—and I make the remark because I have seen it objected to not very long ago—that we do not hear very much about gifts in chapter xiv. The reason is because it is supposed that we have read chapter xii. God does not write the word to save people trouble, nor is it written, as men preach, in texts; by which the scriptures are divorced, and their strength in connection destroyed. Not so; God has written all His word to be prized, as made a matter for waiting on the Lord, that we may enter in and fully enjoy it, though it may not be understood all at once. How wisely it is so! Let us thank God that His word is so written that there never was a soul since the world began who could take it up and fathom it—even the apostles and prophets themselves. Let us thank God that His word does call us to take

the place of learners. The more God gives us to know, the more He would have us feel how much there is yet to learn; and so we are kept, as He desires us to be, in the attitude of waiting. No doubt this does not suit the world. It suits much better to talk as if all were understood; while, on the contrary, it will be found how little is actually known of scripture when reduced to a science.

The point here is this, that chapter xiv. is an integral part of the great argument which is begun in ch. 12; and ch. 13 is not, as men suppose, a mere digression on love, but a direct, necessary, element at this point. For whatever may be the value of love individually, how much more is it necessary when we are brought into the place of such nearness, of such scope for affection, of such need of patience, of such call for faith, lest all be marred by flesh and self-will!

No doubt our coming together as God's church supposes our redemption. It is not a question of some peculiar gift or doctrine, but of God's presence who redeemed us—that He might enjoy with us, and we with Him, whatever He has given us. Such is the church's communion. Accordingly, it is the place where love has its full exercise; and I do not hesitate to say that there could not else be such a sphere for love as that which is given us now. We shall have it in heaven in another way, and in a fullness without alloy suitable for eternity. There, of course, all will be positive perfection and enjoyment; but here, in a time of difficulty, of sorrow, of trial, in a place where we have constantly to walk superior to circumstances, is a sphere where love can best grow, and its effects may admirably flourish.

The Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly, Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly: Part 3

Here we have the two great hindrances that are too often at work. In both cases we see clearly flesh and not the Spirit of God; for the Spirit of God, as He works in all, so He takes up each and gives each his place, and this because it is God that has put them there. Consequently, whenever the Spirit of God works thus in souls, there should be the refusal of everything that would weaken or frustrate the will of God: especially if love also is drawn out towards each member of the body of Christ, because it is a member. However we need not enter into that further now.

You will note that in the 21st verse the apostle is more peremptory than in the 15th. We have in the former, “The eye cannot say unto the hand,” whereas in the latter it is “If the foot shall say.” The one is the danger of the strong or greater gift, the other of the weak or less; and the former is of the two the most offensive to the Lord.

In ver. 21 the apostle takes in the two greatest extremes of all. “Neither again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” He is looking here, of course, simply at the body, and bringing out the moral force of the comparison, which is, that the highest gift cannot treat the lowest as if he were needless to him. And, indeed, it is so where grace works; for I am persuaded that you will find that the greater the gift (where there is spirituality as well as power), there will be the more hearty desire for the working of the least gift that God has given for the good of the church. There will be no such thought as that, because one person has a superior gift, all others are to hold their peace while he is present. The spring of blessedness in the assembly is God Himself, and not any particular member of the body, though he may be by grace a very important channel of working for the good of the assembly. The great point is the sense that God it is who works in the church; and God may, even in the presence of the very greatest, it might be even of the apostle himself, be pleased to use, in a true way to edification, a very simple and lowly member of the body of Christ.

The main thing is that neither the lesser members are to desire a greater place than they have, nor the greater ones in any way to act as if they could do without the least. They are all precious in the assembly of God. “Nay, much more” (and this brings in what was referred to), “those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary.” It is not that they have their place only, but “they are necessary.” They may be trying enough by times, and too plainly show the feebleness of those who had not the power to rise above the circumstances and, things around; but still “they are necessary.” “And” (ver. 23) “those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need.” Take for instance the face. Care of this is not wanted, for it is of itself a comely part. But we take more care naturally of that part which has not the same comeliness, as for instance the foot. So here we find the divine aim: “But God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body.” See to it then that there be no setting aside of what God has given for the good of the church, whether it be the lesser or the greater ones opposing each other. If so, the same result, in either case, is produced. It is man thwarting the government of God, nay, His richest grace, in the church: would, he even make the Spirit appear a party to the dishonor of the Lord? May we be kept and guided in the path of Christ!

The apostle goes on (ver. 26), “And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.” And then, in the next verse, he brings in a statement well worthy of our mature consideration, “Ye are the body of Christ.” Not of course, that they were independent of any others throughout the world; but still they were the expression of Christ in that particular place. Strictly speaking, it is neither “a” body as if there was more than one, nor “the” body as if they alone completed it, but “Christ's body.” They had the privileges and the responsibility attaching to it. They were His body there. If you went to another place, you would find not another body but still the same. Looking at them individually, we see that “they are members in particular.”

Each member is a member of Christ, not of a but of the church, His body. In fact, there is no such thing in scripture as a member of a church. Scripture repudiates such language, which proceeds from the “individual” idea that we have been looking at. There everything is individualized, even the church itself, as well as every person that belongs to it. It is all on a false foundation, not for our relations as Christians, but for those of the church.

The truth is that the Holy Ghost, being a divine person—equally, therefore, acting in all the assemblies throughout the world—necessarily makes all one; and this is the reason why there was no such thing as “one body” until the Holy Ghost came down. In this way He it is, not faith, that unites to Christ. I quite admit that, unless there is faith, a man will never get to heaven; and therefore nothing is more important. This was true before the church existed at all; but now with it something more is found. A divine Person is come down, who never took flesh like the Lord Jesus, and never therefore was pleased, so to speak, to unfold His glory in any method so circumscribed as having a body prepared, to be incorporated with His divine nature, i.e. to be Himself a man while yet God. But now in fact the Holy Ghost, never having been pleased so to take a body or become incarnate, takes up all those who believe in our Lord Jesus Christ and brings them into unity. This is the

true account of the church, and no other; and the consequence is therefore that, no matter where it may be, it is always the “body of Christ.” It is so wherever one finds saints gathered to Christ's name. Wherever they are met in His name, there the Holy Ghost is left free to work for Christ's glory. Alas! how many true saints are scattered in sects, not so assembled. The state of things around us is that the two things are not found together. There are “members in particular,” but not holding to Him as the Head, or gathered on the ground of “the body of Christ.” I speak of the fact, not of intelligence. There are many real Christians, no doubt, but they are not found simply on that footing. Are there not individual saints scattered up and down the denominations? They are Christ's members; but could one say of them denominationally that they are met as “the body of Christ”?

Now, our wisdom is to own and act on this truth as on every other known to us. God has shown us the failure and the ruin of the church, and that whatever does not uphold the principle of the body of Christ will always be wrong. If I think only of the ruin of the church, there will be no confidence, nor a happy going forward according to the mind of God: the fact of the ruin will be used as an excuse for doing nothing. But, where we believe that God has His assembly, although it is at the present time in a state of confusion, we ought, if members of it, to grieve over it, and humble our souls about it; but we must see that we be not acting inconsistently ourselves. If there are ever so few meeting together who own this truth, then the Spirit of God acts as truly here now as He did of old. Is this said to encourage assumption? God forbid! for I should not myself meet with any who would arrogantly claim to be the church of God, any more than with such as meet on any other ground than that. Let us cleave to the truth, and this practically, without setting up to be more or other than we really are, not daring to meet in any other way or name but His, yet owning unfeignedly the present ruin-state. The only sound and sacred principle to meet on is the one body, and this the body of Christ.

We are next told (ver. 28) “God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” Observe, it is the same design as before—putting down to the lowest place that which the Corinthians had set first. “First apostles,” and last of all are these “diversities of tongues." None of the brethren, however, possessed all the gifts, as we find in the 29th and 30th verses: “Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret?” Further, they are set in the church, not in “a” church; and it is the church on earth, not in heaven. It is real living unity in practice. Nationalism or Voluntarism is therefore excluded no less than Romanism. They all deny the one body in principle and in practice.

The chapter closes with an exhortation to “covet earnestly the best gifts;” that is, those that were for edification, though they had less of display than of power and blessing for the assembly.

Before taking up chapter 14 in detail, I may add a few words as connecting the previous part of it and the chapter before 13 with what we have already had. I showed in chapter 12, that the great principle is laid down, not merely of gifts, but of what is called “spirituals” —the word “spiritual” being much more than a question of particular “gifts.” What appertains to the Spirit is the point. Now the most important of all is this—not so much these gifts, in which is displayed His power in various forms, but, above all, the presence of God—the presence of God now made good in this especial form and energy that the Holy Spirit is here to act sovereignly in the assembly.

This, therefore, is a deeper question, and of greater moment than any display of particular gifts; and we must not forget that it is included in the doctrine of chapter xii. It shows, no doubt, that there are various forms in which He works. But who is it that works? God Himself. Nor is it only in a general way in which He may be said to do everything; but the solemn truth here brought before us, and which we must each value according to the measure of our appreciation of divine things, is this—God present in a new and intimate way, as He never was before, nor could be apart from, the accomplishment of redemption. It immensely clears the subject where the soul enters into this.

We know very well that at all times in the history of the world God intervened. Never did He fail to leave Himself a witness of His power and goodness. But it is another thing to have Himself so present as to give character to the place where He has been pleased to come and make it His dwelling. Granted that it is no question now of a visible sign. In Israel it was; and they being dull, and its being according to the character of His general dealings, Jehovah gave them a palpable proof of His presence. There was the cloud that betokened it. This gave the certainty, therefore, to an Israelite that God dwelt there in a way He had never done before. If they were redeemed out of Egypt, they had God Himself thus taking His abode in the midst of His people. But then this was only a sign—for such was the nature of it—of a God who could not be approached too near, of a God who was purposely bringing out the sinfulness of the people that stood in this comparative nearness to Him. Still there was amongst them sin, and no offering as yet which could put it away forever.

Now, on the contrary, the basis of the presence or dwelling of God with us is the glorious fact that sin is judged in the cross, and that God accordingly can be present not merely judicially, nor merely with a sign of His glory, but in the reality of His grace; not of course closing as yet the place of responsibility, nor taking us out of the path of faith, but strengthening us in it. Accordingly the grand point throughout all these chapters is this: whatever consists not with the presence of the God of all grace who is Himself in the midst of His people—actually there, whatever is not suited to Him, is unsuited to them. It is not a question merely of the people being Christians—which is all taken for granted—but of truth, love, and righteousness in dependence on God in the use of the means that He gives us to glorify the Lord Jesus by the Spirit in His assembly.

God is here in our midst: not merely dwelling in each, which is perfectly true, but God making us, when gathered together, His dwelling. This principle is laid down, not merely in chapter xii., but in chapter 3, as it is supposed throughout the Epistle. We must remember that it is a presence here, not merely one by-and-by, but now on earth. At that time they had God acting according to the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ over Satan; so that there were healings, and miraculous powers, the fruit of complete victory over what even the judgment of God had brought into the world. But, besides that, they had what is of permanent value for the testimony of God here below: as, for instance, grace edifying the members of the body of Christ by teachers and the like—the word of wisdom, and of knowledge, &c. On this without dwelling more, let US simply recall the two great facts: God's dwelling on the earth; and, again, that dwelling, while made good and true in each particular spot, as really one wherever it may be found. That is, there is a stamp of unity about all, which is bound up with the fact that the Holy Ghost is there, who by His presence is incapable of imprinting anything else than unity. Who does not see one Spirit, not only working by each gift, but unifying all the members?

Now I press this, because there is not a single religious system on the face of the earth which has not in some way let slip that unity—even those who boast most of it. Take, for instance, the Church of Rome. After all there is a vast deal, even in Romanism, of what you may call

independency, as admitting not only of its separate parishes and distinct dioceses, &c. but of totally different and opposing monastic orders. The one thing that gives the appearance of unity is that there is one governor over all. They and others talk about unity of doctrine, discipline, and the like. But they do not see how utterly short this is of the “one body.” For there might be the same kind of doctrine and discipline in half-a-dozen bodies, and no unity whatever; as for instance, in the various Methodist societies, or in the Presbyterian churches, which are apart one from another, as much as from other denominations. And what is the worth of unity in a sect? This any might have. “The unity of the Spirit” is olivine; and all saints are bound to keep it.

(To be continued, D.V.)

The Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly, Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly: Part 2

Now that the apostle has brought in this great two-edged sword, as it were, to guard the glory of the Lord Jesus, we find him turning to another grave truth in verse 4, “There are diversities of gifts.” The Corinthians acted as if the only gifts worth talking about, and these above all and evidently grand, were such a manifest display of the divine power as in speaking many tongues without having learned them, or in working miracles. No doubt they did draw attention to the person who had the power so to speak or work; and it is very evident that here was divine power acting in a special way. But the Spirit of God recalls to one of the most characteristic truths attached to His own presence in the church— “There are diversities of gifts.” Whatever does not leave room for every gift that God has given is not the church of God acting as such. Whenever it is an accepted principle or a settled practice, when it is a sanctified order of things, to shut out the diversities of gifts that God is now giving to the church of God, it is a state that He disowns. It is contrary to the nature and aim of the church of God. Nor do I mean an opening for their exercise here or there in outposts, or in less important and comparatively private ways, but not on the greatest occasions, the coming together of all saints as God's assembly ( ) whether for the Lord's Supper or at other times. Not so did the Lord ordain as is shown by the apostle in all the context, where, correcting disorders, he maintains this intact.

There are diversities of gifts, “but the same Spirit;” because although these gifts differ immensely in their character, yet they all come from the same source. God has to do with one as truly as another. There is an immense difference between the lesser and the greater gifts, but “the same Spirit;” and if I would respect the Spirit of God, I should respect the least gift that comes from Him. Then there is another thing which the Corinthians had forgotten (verse 5), “And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord.” One cannot have a gift without being a servant; that is, one is not his own master in the use of the gift, but a servant of the Lord Jesus. This the Corinthians had lost or never known; they were acting independently. Even the Holy Ghost Himself has deigned to take the place of a servant, and, having come down to that place, He lifts no one above it. This is the next great truth presented to us—not only diversities of gifts and the same Spirit, but differences of administrations (that is to say, of services), yet the same Lord. And, lastly, there were the results produced by these powers which wrought in subjection to the sovereign glory of God. For if there were differences or “diversities of operations” as they are called (verse 6), “it is the same God that worketh all in all.” What an immense present fact in a world of vain show!

If this was rather the general statement of divine power in the church of God, we come in the next place to its working in each individual. The apostle has been stating the common principle. There was the same Spirit, by whom all gifts were distributed, the same Lord, and the same God; but now he comes to the particular forms of the gift (verse 7): “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” It was not to please the individual himself, but for others' benefit. For these gifts to effect common good is the declared aim of all these workings of the Spirit of God in the church.

Then (verse 8) we have “For to one is given by the Spirit [not miracles, but] the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge.” Note that he carefully adds “by the same Spirit,” because knowledge has a considerably lower character than wisdom; but at the same time the “knowledge” that he owns here is as truly by the Holy Ghost as the “wisdom.” What is this word “wisdom” as compared with the word “knowledge?” To gather truth by serious study of God's word is far from being wrong. Indeed it is of the Holy Spirit; and the result is “knowledge;” and the utterance of it He gives is “the word of knowledge.” So Timothy was called to give himself wholly up to it. In fact, what is gathered thus is most justly to be considered the “word of knowledge;” and this no doubt possesses value, as everything has that God gives by the Holy Ghost to the church—the church of God. What a person gleans, spiritually laboring in the field of the word of God, has its place, was meant for all, and is refreshing to the saints of God. But it is not exactly the same as the “word of wisdom;” for “wisdom,” it seems; indicates that the soul is occupied not merely with scripture, but with Him who gave it that one might know Himself Thus the soul, furnished by the word of God, proves what it is to gather God's own mind; not merely to have it in details, as given here and there in scripture, but, by a deeper appreciation of His word, to enter into that acquaintance with Him which is found not so much in studying texts, as from communion with His own nature, ways, character, and above all with Christ Himself. He was found, I need not say always, “the wisdom of God.” Christ is never called the “knowledge of God,” nor could He be, but the “wisdom of God.” It is rather, I repeat, to be drinking not merely from the stream, but at the spring of all in God Himself! It is thence that the “word of wisdom” is drawn, following the course of the river higher up.

Now you will have noticed that the apostle does not commence with power so evident or striking He begins, on the contrary, with that which the Corinthians had very little love for, what they had painfully neglected and set aside in seeking after those mighty displays which occupied their active minds. The apostle takes them first to what edifies: “To one is given the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge.” He then passes on to the gift of “faith,” namely, that power which enables the soul to break through difficulties. This is the faith that is referred to here. You must remember the gift of faith does not mean believing the truth; for this, of course, is indispensable in all saints.

Then we come to what was sensible to everybody or palpable even to an unbeliever. “To another the gift of healing by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits.” The latter means not discerning whether or not people were Christians, but discovering whether the spirit by which they spoke. was of God or of Satan. In short, it was special power in the application of the preliminary criterion given in the third verse, which we have already noticed.

Then we have (ver. 10-12), “To another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every one severally as He will. For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” Here we have the fundamental principle that I wish to assert just now with all plain ness of speech; and hence we perceive how the divinely taught may take in whatever is true of the two ideas that we have seen at work, give

its just place to each, and combine them both, as the truth does, instead of setting them at war one with another, as men do.

Anything that really weakens faith could not be of God. Whatever would intercept the soul, whatever dared to come between it and the object of faith, could not be of God. Hence, therefore, the word of preaching that God employs for our conversion has exactly this for its object, viz., to put the individual before God—to present Christ to him, to meet his wants, and his misery, and his distance from God. There, consequently, it is entirely a question of faith. By faith it is that a man is justified; by faith he becomes a child of God. All the great individual blessings that a man has for himself, turn on faith in Christ given to him by the Holy Ghost through the word of God. It is through Christ (I need scarcely say) brought and revealed to his soul that this faith is produced.

But there is more than this to see. If one is a believer, what follows? When he submits to the testimony of God, when he has received the word of truth, when he has given to him the Holy Ghost, what is the effect? He is brought into the unity of the body of Christ. It is not simply that he has got the Holy Ghost, giving him the joy of the truth he has received, and withal power and liberty before God; but, besides, the Spirit gives union with all those here on earth who belong to Christ, who are set free for God and yet bound to Him.

Here then is exactly how we find the combination of the two principles entirely dislocated by man. He has divorced what should always be joined together. If you look only at man, there can be no doubt that the individual (or, as we may say, the Protestant) principle of faith is for the soul a far safer one than the Catholic one, which makes the church all. But there is more: we are not looking at things simply with regard to man, but also as to God; and we are bound to do so, and the Holy Ghost is here for the purpose of taking care of the glory of God, which is done by making Christ the object. He only is the object of all the purposes of God and the consequence is, that, until we enter into God's purposes, there never can be the sure or anything like a large enjoyment of the truth.

For when we have the Spirit of God, as He now is given to the believer, it is not only individually; but he is baptized into, or made to belong to, the one body. He is “one spirit with the Lord.” He is, consequently, one with all who are the Lord's. This, again, brings us face to face with the further truth that the Holy Ghost does not simply imprint unity upon the saints, and then leave them, but is here to make good all the objects of the glory of God. It is of very great moment that the children of God should look at the thing personally. I am afraid—and particularly so where people trust creeds instead of scripture—that the simplicity and the force of the plain truth that the Holy Ghost is a divine person is but little understood or even believed. Such is the case now, I believe, among those who are commonly called “Evangelicals,” whether they be Dissenters or Churchmen. Faith in the Holy Ghost as a divine person being feebly entertained, you will find that they generally talk about the Holy Ghost as an “influence.” It is not that men deny the existence of the Spirit of God, but they do not see the all-importance of His being a divine person; and, further than that, a divine person who is here working in God's saints and in God's assembly, sovereignly or as He will, to glorify the Lord Jesus.

Now here precisely we have the truth which the Corinthians too so little appreciated and therefore the apostle brings it out in this distinct manner. “All these” (not “some of them,” not those only which made themselves so conspicuous, but)— “all these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that body, being many, are one body: so also is [not the church only, but] Christ.” The apostle is no doubt looking at the church, but he blends it with the Head, as inseparably united together. He does not speak thus to the Ephesians. They do not require it to be so impressed upon them as did the Corinthians. Impossible to have been so loose as the Corinthians were, if they had remembered that the whole being, head and body, was all one “Christ.” They looked upon themselves as invested with power, and this to them was the whole affair practically. But the apostle would convince them that these powers are but a small mid an inferior part of a vast system of divine working in the church on earth. It is a body one with Christ, and even called so, of which each and all who now believe are living members. “So also is Christ. For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

Then we have (ver. 14), “For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not of the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?” There plainly we have discontent with what the Lord had given. And was there ever-greater reason for this to be weighed than now? Whenever a soul is found faithfully using the gift given to it, there will always be blessing; but if on the contrary, the one with a humble gift, such as would be represented by “the foot,” should covet what he has not got, his own proper work is lost by ignoring his real place in the body. The whole thought therefore is dishonoring to God. So again (ver. 16), “If the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?” Discontent may run through the members, high as well as low.

In verse 17th he puts it thus, “If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?” The blessedness of the body is in each member doing its own function; because it is not merely my ear but I that hear through it, nor is it only my eye that sees, but rather I myself. It is the man. And this it is which gives, therefore, such a sense of unity, and is so real a means of blessing to every member, to the least just as much as the greatest. They all contribute; and indeed there would be a most sensible loss, were the least member to fail in doing its part. This is what the Corinthians had seriously lost sight of; but are we not in just the same danger as they were. Indeed we seem more particularly exposed; because, having come out of systems where there was only room for the priest or the minister, we naturally tend to the same. There is nothing that people sooner slip into than some kind of isolation and individuality; because for the most part they have come from where individuality was strong, and the place of the church was unknown or swamped. For not more truly does the “church” principle destroy the “individual” one, than the “individual” principle neutralizes the “church” one, if each stands alone.

The blessedness of the truth is that we have both—the individual blessing first clear, and then the corporate one, each being made and kept good by the Spirit of God. If the Holy Spirit brings my soul to know Christ, to rest on Him, and rejoice in Him before God, I cannot have it all without laboring that others may have the same blessing. This is the way in which God brings the two principles together and conciliates them round the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. For it is not merely that I have Him as a Savior; I have Him also as the Head. Yea the body is one with Him as here: “So also is Christ.” What an ennobling yet truly humbling standard for our practice, that all we are is a representation of Christ! I do not mean individually alone, but when we come together in the assembly; for this is the public way for the church to be known. How jealous ought we to be, therefore, that every meeting of the assembly should present Christ in truth! If we belong to God's church, what matter about any other church? His is the only church worth contending for; if we are Christians, we are of it. All we need to see to is that we walk, and meet, and worship accordingly.

This, then, is the first violation of the thought of unity, viz., discontent with the place the Lord has given us, the desire for something greater, something more prominent than that which is ours. “But now,” says the apostle, “hath God set the members every one of them in the body,

as it hath pleased Him.” (ver. 28). How establishing this is to the soul! It is what, in our measure, we all want, to be more distinct about. Perhaps there are persons in this room who have come in merely believing that here we are enjoying things more simply and with more purity. This I believe; but it does not give you the true groundwork, nor explain why we have left what man has done in self-will. Is it the fact that we have to do with God in the matter, and that God has to do with us?—that we meet because, and as, it is the will of God? Surely God is still carrying on that building, His holy temple; surely the work of the Holy Spirit is still preceding on according to the figure that is spoken of here—the body of Christ.

Whatever the difficulties, or disorder, or confusion, God's house abides, and of Christ's body we are. We have come to that which expresses it, and it is as members of Christ we meet as we do. Each meeting of the faithful that we have our part in is a witness to the one body, though we frankly own the ruin-state in which the church is here below; even the humblest soul that is accepted in the name of the Lord Jesus, as made by the Holy Ghost a member of Christ's body, has just as real a place in it as any other. Not merely so are the prominent members, but no less are those described, according to the apostle's figure here, as the “uncomely” ones (ver. 23). It is of high practical moment that we should accept unreservedly the truth of God respecting this. So that, supposing there are real Christians that cause trouble or difficulty, it is the teaching of the Spirit of God that we should heartily accept them. What sort of a mother would it be that ever finds fault and becomes impatient with one of her children which complained of anything unduly? A true mother would anxiously care for that child more than any of the others, because it most needed her love. May I not then say that it is exactly thus the Lord really calls us to be? For what is a spiritual mind, but a mind in possession of affections and of a judgment according to God, so that we shall be found seeking just the same things as Christ—not restlessly wishing to get rid of a trial or difficulty or anything of the kind, but bearing all, not only in patience, but with love exercised by it.

Let us take up briefly the other form in which the working of the Spirit of God is apt to be set aside (ver. 21). “The eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; or, again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” Here we have the exact counterpart to what we have been looking at. It is not the inferior part wanting to be something greater, but the superior part that disdains the lesser place. These things, brethren, ought not so to be. But as they were then and we are now, so we do well to lay this instructive warning to heart. The very nature of the body rises up to rebuke the greater gift which would deprecate or hinder the less. Let us be thankful to the grace which has given us any place; let us discharge earnestly the functions God has given us in the body of Christ; but let us prize and make the most of every other member, and not least those who have a place wholly different from our own. Disdain be as far from us as discontent.

(To be continued D.V.)

The Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly, Action of the Holy Spirit in the Assembly: Part 1

1 Corinthians 12

The subject of which the apostle treats in this chapter, as an exposition of the principle (which subject is continued in the next chapter, where we have the spring of power, and in the one after, where we have the practice), was one most deeply needed at that time by the Corinthian saints, and not at all less now. For there is no greater forgetfulness of any part of the truth of God amongst Christians, than as to their great need of the Holy Ghost on the one hand, and as to God's great gift of Him on the other. Indeed, it is bound up with all the distinctive blessing of the church. Not that these chapters contain all, nor that they exhaust every side of the blessing; for we have here the church more particularly viewed as the scene of God's power, not so much as the object of Christ's affection. For the latter we must look into Ephesians. But here we have the truth of the church (not the individual) viewed as that to which God had given the Spirit of “power,” of “love” (which the apostle treats of in chap. 13), and of the “sound mind” that should be shown (which we have in chap. 14).

The Spirit of power was there; but, whatever the energy He works in, the Holy Ghost has in no way set aside responsibility. Man cannot understand this. A divine person, His office is to be here, that He might be in the saints, the dwelling of God, and that they should have therefore an infinite resource; but, at the same time, not so that the might of the almighty Spirit of God could not be thwarted and hindered, or the testimony which was intended to be borne not be spoiled—not only ruined in its object, but turned to wholly different objects.

This was the state of things which came then before the apostle's mind, as a matter for warning, especially in chap. 10. Much more is it that which is actually found around us at the present moment, out of which the word of God has called us to emerge. But what we have to remember, beloved brethren, is that every one of us is apt to turn back more than we suspect to what we have left behind. And hence there is a continual source of weakness, even greater than, though not so gross as, was found amongst the Corinthian saints. We see plainly in them how little the evil effects of that out of which they had come had disappeared from them. They were no doubt but young in the truth; but length of time does not eradicate evil, being in no way a cure for anything that savors of man. There is only one means, which is divine power by the truth; for, if this works in us, it works in self-judgment. Divine power invariably—if there is to be deliverance from evil—makes us sensible of it, as well as to judge ourselves in the light of God. There is not nor can ever be practical deliverance, until the Lord, by the power of His own truth brought home by the Spirit, makes us to sit in judgment on ourselves, searching and trying ourselves to the very core.

But as for the Corinthian saints, they were accustomed to a great deal of a different species of evil—having been under the influence and working of Satan, as he wrought powerfully in the heathen. Even before Christ came, there was a vast deal of demoniacal power in the world. We see it surrounding the blessed Lord at every step. No doubt there were different forms of Satan's power; but one of the worst was that which, usurping the name of God, had given to the Corinthians the idea of religions power. Out of this terribly false condition the Corinthians had come into the church.

And have we no special danger? or if so, what? We have emerged from a state of things, not, it, is true, of that gross character, but from what is not less really foreign to the mind of God. We have come out of what is in point of fact a corruption of Christianity; and hence, therefore, we are very apt to bring in thoughts, feelings, and habits, which we do well to bring to the test of the word of God—even the oldest of us. But those who are comparatively young in the way need it more particularly; they have never yet proved duly their convictions; they have accepted a quantity of things, much more than they are aware of, on the acceptance of others, rather than by divine teaching for themselves. Along with much that is good, there is always the danger of our mingling a little of ourselves in every step of that process, and in particular we

ought not to let in, or slip back into, what we have got out of.

But now for the principle. There are two main ideas among men around us, out of one or other of which we have all come. The one which most extensively prevails is that which I may call the Catholic idea, though perhaps most individuals in this room have known comparatively little of it as experience. Still it is before our eyes, and we are constantly in contact from time to time with persons who suffer from it; and it is well to know how to meet it. The Catholic idea is mainly characterized by this: all blessing, all privilege, is in the church; the grand object of God is the church; there is the Savior, life, pardon, every blessing; the only means of having these is to be in and of it; and this, too, as a present thing. For the Catholic idea does not venture far into the future; nor is heaven so much the object of its contemplation as is the earth. The notion is that, all privilege being concentrated in the church, the individual has scarcely any appreciable place. He is merged. He is merely a cypher, and all his importance is because he belongs to the church. As to himself, why he is not even allowed to call himself a saint; and, as to being a saint at all, it is a question for the church to settle. Not God, but the church determines whether he is to be a saint or not; and perhaps it is not done till fifty years after he is dead and gone. Now, no doubt all this is very gross ignorance; yet it is the form that the Catholic idea has taken. And remember, in speaking of this I am not referring merely to Romanism, but to ancient Christendom, under whatever guise it may present itself.

We have remains, as you know, which show how wildly this theory was taking root not very long after the apostles had disappeared themselves from the earth. No doubt there has been development since; but still the great idea was and is much what I have been endeavoring to set before you. This only is essential: all else is matter of detail and may differ. It is found in Romanism as well as in the Eastern Christian bodies; so it spread after the apostles left, far and wide and permanently.

But a new thing began at the Reformation. When the Catholic system had ripened into a monstrous head of corruption, when the results were morally unbearable among men, when the thought of the church had completely ruined or blotted out all right understanding of God, when on the one hand these who belonged to it, individually considered, were so little in the mind of men that it was no question of living faith, provided they belonged to the church; and, when on the other hand, all who were outside the church, no matter how real their faith or love, were considered heretics, and deserving of no better fate than to be punished soundly in this world for the good of their souls; then came up another and counter thought in which the individual only is prominent. The one point here was that a man should not only read the Bible for himself, believe and be justified for himself, but that, as by faith he becomes a child of God for himself, so he should have been left free to serve God for himself, and choose his own company and his own mode of worship. Here all thought of the church was completely lost, and consequently, giving up consideration of God's assembly, individuals of this way of reasoning combined and formed churches for themselves. This grew, no doubt, to a far larger extent, and was carried out more fully, than was contemplated when first acted on.

But we find, in fact, that those who justly insisted on the importance of individual faith as the saving principle for the soul, and as that which for this glorified God, began to collect together at last, sometimes in a country to themselves, and then again, when in that country there began to be divergences of opinion among them, they made their own distinct churches. If they did not like the great public church of the country, they chose to split off into different religious societies, all essaying to become churches. One was, as they considered, as good in principle as another; but the best church was that which suited a man's own mind. This was the individual idea carried out to its natural results, and such is exactly what we find around us now.

We have the two systems confronting each other in fact. We see the old Catholic notion in those bodies who make everything to be a question of church privilege, who say that it is in the church alone can be found eternal life, or at any rate the hope of it—I might almost say, only the chance, for it comes to this. The whole system is a question of the church dispensing, the church acting, the church pronouncing, the church teaching what is truth, and really saving: everything is a question of the church. But in the other case the church is lost in the individual. It is each person who by faith has received the gospel and become a Christian, who consequently uses his own judgment in forming his own church, or joining the church he likes best. Such is the two-fold state of things in general.

Let me now ask you, what is the truth of God respecting it all? And this is where the importance of divine revelation comes in. The Corinthians were in danger of drifting into one or other of these two rivals, as we shall clearly find in these chapters. It is not, indeed, a very uncommon thing to find a mixture of the two, and this mixture we may trace among the Corinthians. The great thing to which your attention is called is this: the blessed manlier in which the Holy Ghost interferes in order to establish the believer in the truth; and so, without controversy, the soul finds itself able, while kept from what is wrong in each of these principles singly, to enjoy all that is right in both, as God's will alone is.

There is no possibility of a thing holding its ground on earth, unless there be something which gives it a moral claim. There must be a fragment of truth in order to win and keep Christians together. So it is when we look at the Catholic idea, and in what is called the Protestant view. There is a measure of truth in each; but when we come to God's word, there the truth appears about both, and in this order: it is not the church first and then the individual, but the individual first and then the church.

So it is introduced to us in our chapter, as it is always in Scripture. Take Matt. 16: what is the question the Lord first puts? “Whom do men say that I am?” One of them gives an answer for himself—an answer which would have done for each, though he who spoke went beyond the rest. “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This was a full confession of Christ, owning Him to be not the true Messiah only, but a divine person in the nearest relation to the Father; and the moment the Lord Jesus hears it, He brings out the purpose of His assembly— “On this rock I will build my church.” He had not then begun to build it, and He has not done building it yet.

Again in the Epistle to the Ephesians the same order is most marked. The individual Christian always precedes the body. Take for instance the first chapter: it is only in the last verse we see the church; and, if you look through the whole of the Epistle, it is regularly so. The individual is always set in his own place, and this necessarily is a question of faith; for faith is indispensable to the individual, and must be so. He cannot have faith for another. Each must have faith in God for himself. There may be the faith—the common deposit of the truth, which we all own; but still, when we look at faith itself, it is necessarily individual in the soul. Then follows the question of the church as the house of God and the body of Christ.

When one believes the gospel, one receives the Spirit, who not only is the seal of salvation, but also unites him to Christ as a member of His body There are divinely given relationships, whether individual or corporate; but the corporate follows the individual, the power in both being the Holy Ghost after redemption was effected, for the Spirit was not given till Jesus was glorified.

It is just the same thing in the chapter which is before us now.

The apostle opens the matter thus— “Concerning spiritual [gifts], brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” It will be observed that the word “gifts” is inserted by the translators. Nor is it correct; for the subject, though embracing gifts, goes farther, and takes in what is of far deeper moment as being the source of all, the presence of the Spirit working in the sovereign power of a divine person in the church, and by its members. Perhaps “spirituals” would give the idea, if our language could bear it without any addition. If we must, for clearness, supply a word, it should be “manifestations” rather than “gifts.”

Next, he tells them, “Ye know that when1 ye were Gentiles” —not “that ye were.” It was nothing new to say that they were Gentiles, but “when ye were Gentiles, ye were carried away unto those dumb idols even as ye were led.” That is, it was not a mere leaching, but rather in those heathen days a carrying away to what they would now look back on with pain, seeing the excessive folly of it as well as its daringness. It was Satan's direct opposition to the truth of God. They would learn that the true God is anything but a dumb idol—that He is one who has not only spoken to us by His Son, but Who opens the mouths that were once dumb to speak for Jesus Christ the Lord by His Spirit.

Thus the apostle brings in the test of spirits in the confession of Jesus as Lord (verse 3), “Wherefore I give you to understand that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed.” Here he does not, of course, mean only the precise term “anathema,” or “accursed;” but what he has, as I judge, in his mind, is this: whatever lowers Jesus is an impossibility to the Holy Ghost—a very simple principle, but one which is the only perfect test for all truth in the church of God. The apostle gives it in a double form, a criterion for as well as against. “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” If man ventures without the Spirit of God, he becomes a prey to the evil one who seeks to lower Jesus. The Holy Ghost alone knows what is proper to His person. And He does not speak of Him merely as the Son of God. The point where error comes in is in the Son of God becoming a man; for it is the complex person of the Lord Jesus that exposes persons to break down fatally. There are those, no doubt, who deny His divine glory; but there is a far more subtle way in which the Lord Jesus is lowered; and this is where He is owned to be a man, but where the manhood of the Lord is allowed in some way to swamp His glory, and neutralize the confession of His person. Thus, one is soon perplexed, and one lets that which puts Him in association with us here below work so as to falsify what He has in common with God Himself. There is but one simple thing that keeps the soul right as to this, which is, that we do not venture to pry and never dare to discuss it, fearing to rush in human folly upon such holy ground, and feeling that on such ground as this we are only worshippers. Wherever this is forgotten by the soul, it will invariably be found that God is not with it—that He allows the self-confident one, who of himself ventures to speak of the Lord Jesus, to prove his own folly. It is only by the Holy Ghost that he can know what is revealed about the Lord Jesus. But then we have the double guard: if a man lowers Christ, it is not by the Spirit; and if a man truly says that Jesus is Lord, it is by the Spirit. Here is the chief test for perpetual use in the church of God.

This is the truth about which we ought above all to be jealous. For there is a divine nature in the child of God that is sensitive to what affects Christ, and ought to be so. I cannot conceive anything more destructive to the soul than losing this sensitiveness. The person of Christ is a matter too serious, too fundamental, for any speculation to be allowed, and, in point of fact, the reason of it is this: the Holy Ghost, by whom is all true teaching, is not really with the soul that ventures to teach out of his own resources. He is here for the express purpose of glorifying Christ. Now this is a great thing to be simply settled on. The Holy Spirit of God is here for this very thing. It is not merely for comforting or edifying, though both come in; but the purpose constantly in view is this—He is come for exalting Christ, and guarding Him from all that lowers His glory. It is the aim and work of the Spirit of God as presented in the teaching before us.

(To be continued D.V.)

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 12:16-31, Notes on

We have seen, then, that God has so constituted the body of Christ, like the natural one, that there should be no division of interest, but the good of each in the good of all, and the care of each for every other member.

“And whether1 one member suffer, all the members suffer with [it]: whether a [or one]2 member is glorified, all the members rejoice with [it].” (Ver. 26.) It is not said merely that they ought, but that they do. Whether it be good or ill, all that is according to God in one Christian goes out for blessing to all the rest; and there is not an ill or scandal in a saint at the antipodes which does not affect with its shade and suffering every other in these lands. We consciously suffer or rejoice, one may add, in the measure of our spiritual power. But the effect is real throughout the church. It is a body—the body of Christ—and as a whole it feels in joy or sorrow: else it were not a real organic unity. Undoubtedly also its present condition, with denominational barriers, which in all the saints sever into independent associations, as well as with the allowance of the world in most, reduces spiritual sensibility to the lowest: still, fax from desiring otherwise, one dares not deny that it subsists, surviving these deplorable hindrances by its own vitality, as flowing from the Holy Spirit of God who dwells in the church.

See how the blessed apostle brings home the truth from the abstract to the concrete, applying this precious truth to the case before him. It is true that the state of the Corinthians was such that he would not go there. If he had gone, he must have taken a rod with him, and this was far from his heart. He would rather write, and wait; and God blessed his written rebuke to their restoration in measure, and he could rejoice, as we see in the second epistle. But even here, before he was refreshed with the fruit of grace, while censuring severely their faults, he does not hesitate to say, “Now ye are Christ's body, and members in particular.” (Ver. 27.) Such is the privilege, and such no less the responsibility of the local assembly; not independently, of course, for this would deny the body of Christ, but representatively, for, if it were not so, the local assembly were not Christ's body; and as this they collectively were, and also, they were members severally.

It is very evident, too, that it is not an ideal or future picture. It is a living reality on earth, which every Christian is bound to walk in and manifest, abandoning at all mat whatever is inconsistent with, or destructive of, it. It is a state now on earth, not about to be by-and-by in heaven. There will be no such thing as the suffering of one and the sympathy of the rest on high. Unbelief shirks responsibility, and would like to conceive it another state, not yet practicable, because it does not like the trial. In heaven, no doubt, there will be perfect love, and all selfishness will be gone forever; but it is quite a different state of things, and not once contemplated in these verses.

"And God set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then powers, then3 gifts of healings, helps, governments, kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all powers? Have all gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But desire earnestly the greater4 gifts, and yet I show you a way of exceeding excellence." (Ver. 28.)

We see hence how completely the true thought is that God, not man, arranged the assembly, and the relative place of all in it. It is the same principle, from the highest to the lowest, from apostles to the least gift for the manifestation of the Spirit in it. And the Corinthians then, as others of late, had to hear, whether they heeded or not, that not those striking displays of power in which they found their childish surprise and delight, like the world without, but gifts they were really, though relatively first, and second, and third, the last-named being the very one they had been abusing to no small disorder and hindrance of edification in the assembly. The apostles had a place of governing for Christ which prophets had not, though both constitute the foundation on which this building of God is built. (Eph. 2) Teachers were subordinate, of course. "Helps" and "governments" are commonly supposed to be the gifts needed for the offices of deacon and elder respectively. This at least is certain, that there is no difficulty in understanding this of the presbyters or bishops, because these had to be . For "apt to teach" is not the same thing as a "teacher." The ruling elders of Presbyterianism are very distinct from scriptural elders; and so still more is the one teaching elder, or the minister. Other societies diverge, if possible, more from the principle laid down here and elsewhere.

But it is the Lord who calls, not the church. The church may be the sphere of the exercise of the gifts, never the source of the authority, any more than of the power, both of which come from Christ. It is He who gives mission: He sends laborers to sow or reap. Nor does scripture over assert it to be the church's office to examine the candidate for the ministry, as it is called, nor authoritatively to declare its judgment. There is no appointed way for the church in either case, because it is not the church's work or duty. The Lord qualifies the servant whom He calls for the work He appoints to be done; and He works by the Spirit, not only in this member, but in all the others, to have His call and work and workmen respected, though flesh and world be stirred up of the enemy to discredit all. Hence we find the church at Corinth, as well as those of Galatia, questioning, not declaring authoritatively (which God never asked any to do) the apostleship of Paul. Ministry, according to scripture and this very chapter in particular, is clearly the exercise of a gift from the Lord to a given end. So says the apostle Peter in his first epistle (chap. iv. 10): "As every man [each] hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." There is therefore no real ministry according to God without a gift in the word; and where such a gift is exercised, it is ministry. Only there were also lower gifts of power, and these the apostle puts in their true place, as the Corinthians had put them out of it.

It is to be noticed too how, in verses 29, 30, the apostle's questions suppose distribution of gifts among the members of Christ, and not their concentration either in one or in all. Neither have all the same functions, nor has any one all the functions which are expressly said to be distributed to each of many members, to this one, and to that another.

The Corinthians' folly was not greater in wishing all the gifts to be in each and all the saints, than the modern theory of arrogating all, as far as public ministration goes, to a single official. The one was ignorant vanity before the truth was fully revealed in a written form; the other is more guilty presumption in presence of the acknowledged word of God, which condemns every departure from His principles, and the great fact of the one body with its many members, wherein the Holy Spirit works to glorify the Lord Jesus.

At the same time the saints are encouraged to desire earnestly the greater gifts, but these were for edification, not for show. And yet he points out to them a way surpassingly excellent; not surely a mere way, however eminently good, to obtain these gifts, as some suppose, but a way for souls to feel and think, to walk and worship, beyond all gifts. It is the way of love, which he opens out in the next chapter.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 12:14-25, Notes on

The apostle proceeds to employ the idea of the body to illustrate the assembly of God as now existing on earth. Doubtless it was in season for the state of things then in Corinth; but it is over needed while we are here below, and never more so than now, when the state of Christendom renders it, on the one hand, harder to seize and apply the truth, and, on the other, still more imperatively due to the injured honor of the Lord, whose word and will are in general so grievously set at naught and ignored.

"For also the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not a hand I am not of the body, it is not on this account not of the body; and if the ear say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body, it is not on this account not of the body. If the whole body [were] an eye, where the hearing? If all hearing, where the smelling? But now God set the members each one of them in the body according as he pleased. And if they all were one member, where the body? But now [are there] many members, and one body. And the eye cannot Bay to the hand, I have no need of thee; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. But much more the members of the body that seem to be weaker are necessary; and those which we think to be less honorable [members] of the body, on these we put more abundant honor, and our uncomely [members] have more abundant comeliness; but our comely [members] have no need. But God blended the body together, having given more abundant honor to that which lacked, that there might be no division in the body, but that the members might have the same concern one for another." (Vers. 14-25.)

The great and most obvious characteristic of the body is that it consists of not one member but many. This is so essential to its nature that it could not be called "the body" if it consisted of but one member, and not of many. It would be a monstrous formation, not the beautiful unity with diversity seen in the human body, as indeed in every other organization. It is exactly so with the assembly of God. It is not only His house, but Christ's body in virtue of the one Spirit who has baptized all the believers, whatever their antecedent and their otherwise irreconcilable differences, into one: an unity which subsists now, and not by-and-by alone, on earth, and not merely in heaven. Indeed we may go farther, and say that the sole object of the Spirit's instruction here is the church now on earth, and not at all in heaven, where we hear of the bride and the new Jerusalem, never the one body or the many members.

But it is important to observe that the instruction has no bearing on denominations, save simply to blot them out. So far are they from being contemplated in the exhortation, that the truth of the one body utterly condemns them, root and branch. In no extent or way, then, can the apostle's words be applied to the different denominations which now exist. It is opposed to the fundamental unity of the body on which Paul insists, that one denomination stands in need of another. The body has many members, not denominations, which only exist antagonistically to that unity. Far from being necessary to the due working of the church, like the many members of the body, they frustrate the truth, allowed

in theory perhaps, but always denied in practice, as indeed they are dead against the will of the Lord.

The first practical inconsistency with the church's constitution which the apostle warns against (vers. 15, 16) is the discontent of inferior members with their position. They were in danger of ignoring and neglecting their own functions, from envy of those who had a higher place. “If the foot say, Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body, it is not [or, is it] on that account not of the body. And if the ear say, Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body, it is not (or, is it) on this account not of the body.” Such disaffection, if carried out, would destroy the church. Each has its own office, but for the assembly, not for itself; as the foot and hand, the eye and ear, act for the entire body.

Next the absurdity of such wishes is shown. If one member might desire lawfully some special place, so might all the rest; the consequence of which would be the ruin of the body. “If the whole body [were] an eye, where the hearing? If all hearing, where the smelling?” (Ver. 17.) The admirable co-ordination and sub-ordination of the various members in the one body would be at an end.

Nor is this a question of a true theory or of a wise practice, but of the divine will. God has so ordained it; and those who wish otherwise are fighting against His word. “But now God set the members each one of them in the body according as he pleased.” (Ver. 18.) It is not merely the providential fact of one being in the wilderness, and another in a city; nor is it one led of the Spirit to go here, and another there. As the assembly is according to God's design and constitution, each is set in a place arranged by God in the body of Christ, with a gift suitable for it. One's own choice is excluded; and so is selection by other men. It is neither self, nor man, nor the church, but God, who can, or ought to, set the members and He set them, each one of them, in the body according as He pleased. He determines for the least as well as for the greatest. Any other ordering is at issue with God's ways and pleasure. It is God's church, and He, not man, orders the place of each and all in it.

"And if they all [were] one member, where the body?” (Ver. 19.) It is the remark of another that as the former proof of absurdity (ver. 17) appealed to the concrete, so does this to the abstract; I add that as there is shown that the distinctness of the members would be destroyed by forgetting the truth, so here the completeness of the body. “But now are they many members, and but one body.” (Ver. 20.) The unity of the body perfectly consists with diversity in the members, and the diversity of the members with that one body. And so, in fact, it is according to God's mind, It is the departure from this which constitutes mainly the present disorganized state of the church which we see in Christendom. For the moat part all the gifts which can find expression must be in one member in a congregation, and there is not one body, as far as facts attest, but many bodies, differing and opposed. The root of the evil is that the one Spirit is not really owned, but human acquirements and appointment of varying form. And the eye does, in present practice say to the hand, I have no need of thee, and the head to the feet, I have no need of you, the eye and head coalescing in the one sole minister.

Thus openly is the truth enunciated by the apostle set at naught; for he is proving that, as this cannot be without ruin in the natural body, so is the body of Christ framed in the grace of God. “And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.” Disdain is thereby put down even more strongly here, on the part of the higher members toward the lower, than was discontent, as we saw, in the lesser toward the greater. The highest cannot do without the least. God has made nothing, gives nothing, in vain; yea, the truth demands more than this. “But much more, the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; and those [members] of the body which we think to be less honorable, these we invest with more abundant honor; and our uncomely [members] have more abundant comeliness: but our comely [members] have no need. But God blended the body together, having given more abundant honor to that which lacked, that there might be no divisions in the body, but that the members might have the same concern one for another."

By this instinctive sense implanted in us, we feel that the most attractive features can do without the care which is freely bestowed on the less comely; while we know that there are parts of the body which seem weaker, and yet are necessary to its wellbeing, or even life, which last is not the case with some possessed of show and strength, and having a good place, if not so essential. Nature itself teaches us to cover or adorn what is not pleasant or proper to see, while what is fair can appear freely.

So is it according to God with the body of Christ. Much that appears not is of the utmost importance; those that labored like Epaphras are far more necessary than some who shone at Corinth with miracles or tongues. As we cover the feet, not the face, so it is that God uses and honors what is apt to be despised; and so should we, if we have the mind of Christ; and this is thus ordered of God to guard against the tendency to division in the body. Had the Corinthians heeded this, how much sorrow and shame would have been spared! The disorder, however, grace has turned to our account, who have been awakened to see and judge, and to have done with that which is so dishonoring to the Lord, but a state which is ever ready to repeat itself, and not least where knowledge takes the place of love, and saints condescend to form cliques with a favorite leader, to help them on in the sorry work of jealousy and detraction. Is this the members having the same concern one for another? or is it not schism, against which God tempered the body together so that there should be none?

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 12:7-13, Notes on

WE come next to individual distinctions, the special forms of the Spirit's working in Christians.

“But to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for profit. For to one, through the Spirit, is given [the] word of wisdom, and to another [the] word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit;1 to a different one faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healings by the same2 Spirit, and to another operations of powers, and to another prophecy, and to another discerning of spirits;3 to a different one kinds of tongues, and to another interpretation of tongues. But all these things operateth the one and the same Spirit, dividing in particular to each as he pleaseth.” (Vers. 7-11.)

It is well to remark that the apostle is speaking only of the assembly, of each one there and not in the world. This might seem needless to notice, did we not know that a whole community in Christendom is based on the opposed assumption that a manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man on earth without restriction. Here the apostle is treating strictly of the church: to each within it is the manifestation of the Spirit given, and that with a view to the common good, not for personal influence or display. Chrysostom is quite in error in supposing that the term “manifestation” is here used because unbelievers do not own God, save by visible wonders. For it is not a question of miracles only, as the very first samples (the word of wisdom and that of knowledge) prove; nor is it a sign to unbelievers, but for the profit of believers.

The way of the Spirit too is not concentration of all His powers in a single person, but distribution to a variety of individuals; and this because the assembly is contemplated, not a chief man but the church, by the different constituents of which God is pleased to work for the good of all. “For to one, through the Spirit, is given [the] word of wisdom, and to another [the] word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit.” The apostle takes care to begin with what would be called non-miraculous gifts, the better to counteract the fleshly mind, whether of the Corinthians or of any others, which sets an inordinate value on what strikes the eye, the mind, or the imagination by undeniable effects of power. Though not miraculous however, the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge are as expressly of the Holy Spirit as the most striking sign-gifts. It is not through a commanding, or a merely “sanctified,” intellect that the word of wisdom comes; it “is given through the Spirit,” “According to the same Spirit” is given the word of knowledge. They are thus no less supernatural, though not in the ordinary sense miraculous. They are the fruit neither of innate powers nor of acquirement, but of the Spirit, just as is the new birth of every believer; and far more important than any miracle, grave as it may be and glorifying to God in its own place and for its own purpose.

What then is “wisdom” as distinguished from “knowledge?” Wisdom seems to me that moral discernment given by God of things as they are before Him, and consequently as they truly are in themselves, and in relation to one another, which is of prime value for practical judgment and conduct here below. Good and evil, right and wrong, are thus seen intuitively, because of familiarity with the presence of God, not only in their results but in their principles and springs. Knowledge is rather that understanding of revealed truth, which of course therefore is given through a diligent use of the scriptures, and is of great value for appreciating the ways as well as word of God, though the abuse of it issues in systems of divinity, of prophecy, and the like. The “word” in the two instances means or implies the faculty of communicating to others the wisdom or knowledge, as the case may be. It does not seem correct to infer that the prophets were characterized by the latter as apostles undoubtedly were by the former. It would be more according to scripture if one said that “the word of knowledge” pertained to the teacher, always remembering that an apostle or a prophet might also be a teacher and a preacher, as Paul himself was beyond all controversy. But his was a rare combination of gifts, and all of them rich, deep, and ample in order to accomplish the special work for which he was called of the Lord.

But; next follow very different manifestations of the Spirit. “To a different one faith by () the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, and to another operations of powers, and to another prophecy, and to another discerning of spirits,” &c. Clearly “faith” here, as sometimes elsewhere, does not mean a soul's believing in Christ or the gospel for salvation, being a manifestation of the Spirit, and this to one here or there among the Christians. It is that distinctive gift from God which enables its possessor to face foes and dangers, and rise above hindrances or difficulties, and be assured of the issue, where others, even saints, are perplexed and disquieted. It is thus distinct from healings, powers, prophecy, &c.

There seems no need of dwelling on “gifts of healings in virtue of () the same Spirit,” further than to say that it is not more comprehensive, but less, than “faith.” There was faith in him who exercised spiritual powers in healing the sick, but gifts of healings were restricted of course to their own peculiar domain. “Faith,” as such, might be exercised in a great variety of ways besides that which strengthened some to be martyrs or confessors. Again, another might have “operations of powers” (erroneously rendered in the Rhemish and the Authorized Versions, “the working of miracles"), which were not “healings,” but such superiority to things material, or beings spiritual, as we see promised in Mark 16:17, 18, and illustrated in the Acts of the Apostles. “Prophecy” another might have given him, which was an energy of the Holy Ghost in the purely spiritual domain, enabling him to give out the mind of God as to the present or future. This definition embraces the twofold application of the term in scripture, whether to the narrow field of prediction, or to the larger one of declaring God's mind and will, so as to act on conscience with unfailing, divine conviction. (See for the latter 1 Cor. 14; for the former Acts 11) “Discerning of spirits” is another gift, which means the faculty of deciding, not between true and spurious professors of the Lord Jesus, but between the Spirit's teaching and that which simulated it by evil spirits. The general responsibility to try or prove the spirits if they are of God we see in 1 John 4, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Here it is a special gift. The danger, or rather the fact, of misleading some is also fore shown in 1 Tim. 4. The designed distribution of these gifts is strikingly shown in the last two, where “kinds of tongues,” or a variety of languages naturally unknown to the speaker we find distinguished from “interpretation of tongues” given to another, though 1 Cor. 14:13 intimates the desirableness of their combination.

“But all these operateth the one and the same Spirit, dividing in particular to each according as he pleaseth.” (Ver. 11.) The unity of the Spirit, who not only distributes each to each but works all the gifts, thus keeping up dependence on His power, is thus set forth, no less than His sovereign activity as a divine person, however truly come down to work in subservience to the glory of the Lord Jesus. Evil and error may have as many springs as there are men and demons with their varied and often conflicting wills, lusts, and passions. But the selfsame Spirit works all that glorifies Christ in these different gifts, distributed respectively at His pleasure to each servant of the Lord. How this diversity with unity characterizes the church will appear from the reason given in the subjoined comparison, as little understood in its force as it is familiar in its forms or phrases, yet of all moment for His glory and our blessing.

“For even as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the4 body, being many, are one body, so also [is] Christ. For by one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all made to drink of5 one Spirit.” (Vers. 12, 13.) Thus the assembly, being an organic unity, while it consists of many parts or members, harmonizes with the various gifts which the Spirit distributes according to His will. Just such is, as the apostle pointedly says, “the Christ;” we would have said the church. The apostle looks at Christ and. the assembly as one mystic man, which, while one, has many members, and yet all the members, many as they are, forming but one body. “So also is the Christ.” The assembly is identified with Him, and this because “by (, in virtue of) one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all made to drink of one Spirit."

It is important to observe that it was not by faith, precious and mighty as it is, that this unity was formed, but by the Holy Spirit personally sent down from heaven. Faith is individual, it does not unite, though fitting for union morally. One believes the gospel for one's own soul; and the believer receives life for himself in the Son of God, who is life and quickens the dead. But the baptism of the Spirit is over and above life, and is given therefore not to the dead unbeliever but to those already quickened, and the issue is the one body. So the Lord, who had already quickened the disciples, and this even with life more abundantly in resurrection (John 10; 20), promised them just before His ascension that they should be baptized with the Holy Spirit, which accordingly was fulfilled not many clays after at Pentecost. (Compare Acts 1:6; 2; also viii. 15, 16; x. 44, 45; xi. 15-17; xix. 2-6.) The one body had never existed; from Pentecost it begins, as a present fact, on earth, because the Spirit is thus sent to baptize as He never did before; and this continuously, for He when given was to abide in and with us forever. (John 14:16, 17.) No difference in religion, or in social standing, hinders. There is one body and one Spirit. The figures employed in the verse before us seem to

allude to baptism and the Lord's supper, the latter being the standing sign of the church's unity.

But it must be borne in mind that scripture nowhere identifies water-baptism with the baptism of the Spirit. Thus, on the grandest occasion of all, the disciples in Jerusalem, waiting for power from on high, were not baptized with water that day; and the convicted souls from among the Jews were told to repent and be baptized each of them, in the name of Jesus Christ, for remission of sins, and they should receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The disconnection of the two is still more manifest in the case of the Samaritan converts a little after, and of the Ephesian disciples long after. If possible more evidently false is the hypothesis which binds them together in Cornelius' case, with his household and friends, who received the gift of the Holy Spirit before they were baptized with water.

It is not only Catholics then but Protestants also, who are utterly wrong in adducing this text for the effect of baptism. We are not, though Calvin puts it into the lips of the apostle, “engrafted by baptism into Christ's body."6 Baptism is not an engrafting into the body; it associates the believer with His death. It means that we were buried with Christ unto death, a strictly individual truth, and` wholly distinct from making us members of His body, which is always attributed to the Holy Spirit, whether we were or were not. baptized with water at that time. Nor is it possible to attribute to the cup the keeping up of the unity, or the conducting us by degrees to the same unity, for the phrase implies a single finished act (17roTicrOlipEv, like gpaw-riothiliev, both aorists). It is at most therefore a glance at the two institutions of our Lord, and in no way a doctrinal connection. They are separable, and in fact separated, even when true believers are concerned; and, blessed as is the aim and the effect of the Lord's supper, it has nothing whatever to do with our reception of the Spirit, though doubtless the Spirit, when received, gives an immense accession to the enjoyment of the grace of Christ in the supper, and this in communion with one another. They are not sacramentally bound together, even baptism being to death with Christ, not to life, still less to union or the one body which is by the baptism of the Spirit.

Further, it will have been gathered by the thoughtful reader that the baptism of the Spirit is wholly distinct from the new birth, as in John 3. Hence it is incorrect to think that any communication of the Holy Spirit is called His baptism. Neither the new birth nor sanctification of the Spirit is so designated, any more than His inspiration, but only the gift, Himself personally received by the believer, not His quickening operation which makes a believer or gives one faith.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 12:1-6, Notes on

It may be well to remark here the wisdom of God in furnishing the revelation of the due object and order of the Lord's supper before He treats of the Spirit's presence and operations in the assembly. The observance of that holy feast is independent, not only of the presence of elders or bishops, as we have seen, but of the display of power in the assembly. Not that grace now withholds the Spirit's working, but that God would have us to know that His saints are free, and bound, to remember Christ in this solemn and appointed way of His love, apart from this, or that, or any form of gift. The unfolding of the ways of the Spirit in the church follows as a fresh topic, and is thus kept quite distinct from the standing sign of our fellowship in showing forth the Lord's death.

Nor can there be a doubt to the intelligent believer that an apostle had authority from Christ to act, speak, and write of Him in all that concerns the church, its doctrines and discipline, its order and worship; and that these regulations found in the written word bind the church at all times. It is in the despising of these institutes, and the deliberate abandonment of them, consists the sin and ruin of the church; as, again, those who have ears to hear prove it in their practical submission and obedience. For it is not enough to do the will of the Lord in our individual ways. After being awakened of the Holy Spirit, and brought to God, we find, if we believe scripture, that we are not units but living parts of an organic whole. We belong to God, but also are members of a body on earth—the body of Christ, the church, in which the Holy Spirit acts with a view to glorifying the Lord Jesus. We are not left to our own wisdom as to this, but instructed and directed by the word of God, and very especially by such apostolic epistles as the present. Hence the all-importance of diligent attention to these inspired words, with dependence on God and distrust of ourselves; for the aim of Satan is by all means to thwart what is so near to His glory, and so full of blessing to the saints themselves. Self-confidence may be the snare of some; others may be exposed to the influence of tradition, public opinion, and human learning. The truth is that we must be taught of God, though this be in the godly use of every means His word warrants for our help. But then we have the assurance that “they shall be all taught of God” —a word which our Lord drew from the prophets, and applies to the present, so that we may confidently look for its verification in the measure of our waiting on Him in faith.

We shall also see, as we study this new section of the epistle (chaps, 12, 14), how grace turns the errors and faults of the Corinthians to the standing profit of all who desire to learn and walk faithfully. Power is wholly distinct from spirituality. What assembly among the Gentiles surpassed that in the capital of Achaia for the display of energy evidently supernatural? Yet was their communion with God's mind at the lowest ebb. This should have checked the yearning, in our day as in the past, after such manifestations of the Spirit as abounded in their midst; and the rather, as we live when Christendom has grown so inured to its own ways, that though God's word seem to many saints peculiar and eccentric, they have forgotten, if they ever knew, that the most ancient tradition is but an innovation on the “old path” marked down unerringly in scripture. The Corinthians had slipped away from God's end of glorifying the Lord Jesus in the assembly; and hence flesh was active, which forgets the common grace in Christ, and leads us to measure ourselves by ourselves, and to compare ourselves with ourselves. It is vanity, not intelligence; and the fruit is puffing up, not edification. But the watchful eye of the apostle was led to use it for God in his care for all the churches, yea, for the church at all times. Scripture needs every need. It is God's word, and in view of all wants, though He availed Himself only of what then pressed, but after a divine sort.

There are indeed two great and widely prevalent snares: that of sacrificing the individual to the assembly; and that of forgetting the assembly for the individual. Romanism illustrates the former, as Protestantism the latter. In Romanism the church is all; there alone is the Spirit, the truth, holiness, everything: the individual is nothing, not even a saint. It were presumption; the church must settle it, if at all, fifty years after he is dead. The individual cannot even pretend to know his sins forgiven; anathema, says the Council of Trent, to him who says justification is by faith alone, anathema to him who says he can know it for his soul. Thus is the gospel ignored and denied in principle, and most distinctly for every individual within the bosom of Rome; and this to aggrandize the church, which arrogates to itself alone to speak, but speaks here falsehood in Christ's name. And as to any individuals pretending to say that their body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in them, which they have of God, it could only sound still more awful presumption, if not blasphemy. And no wonder, for it is wholly inconsistent with the

sacrifice of the Mass, or the subsistence of an earthly priesthood, which are the Jachin and Boaz of the Romish temple. It is of no avail that the apostolic doctrine is plain, precise, and conclusive that every Christian should know this transcendent privilege of himself now on earth. Romanism boldly sets it aside, and every other which belongs to the individual, in order to swell the church's power and glory. “Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matt. 15:7-9.)

But there is an opposite snare, not so destructive of man's salvation, but equally at issue with God's glory. It is the Protestant scheme, which rightly affirms justification by faith, and God's title to address every man's conscience in His word, though enfeebled and spoiled by putting it as man's right to a private judgment on it. But Protestantism ignores the church of God, and in claiming a coordinate place for churches, national and dissenting and what not, virtually denies the one body on earth. It may dream of one body in heaven, where scripture never speaks of such a thing, but it recognizes ever so many bodies on earth, each independent, which scripture expressly sets aside.

The word of God guards the truth as to both points, and excludes all error. According to it the gospel deals with each soul first of all. By faith the individual has life and is justified, adopted as a child of God, blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Then, over and above his faith, he is sealed by the Spirit. In virtue of one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all given to drink into one Spirit. Thus, and thus only, is the body, the church, formed; it supposed the individual question settled by faith, and then the corporate relationship begins, and is established by the Holy Spirit; and this now on earth, as a privilege indeed of the highest kind, yet at once involving responsibilities thenceforth of the gravest. If the known individual blessedness by faith delivers the soul from Romanism, no less surely does the corporate place of the church, when understood, lift one outside and above Protestantism in all its manifold and varying phases. How could you, intelligibly or consistently, join this or that body, when you are consciously of the “one body,” and responsible to walk according to God's will in that relationship? If I hear God's word, I am first in Christ, then in the church; I know the Spirit dwells in me, and know also that He dwells in the church, which is therefore one above the earth, not merely alike in doctrine, discipline, and polity, which might be in many independent societies, but one body here below. And this is so true and grave, that the truth would call one out of Romanism, if Rome had not an image nor a superstition, and out of Protestantism, if its sects had not a single unconverted member or minister. All this, however, and more, will appear plainly as we pursue the teaching of the apostle.

“Now concerning spiritual things, brethren, I do not wish you to be ignorant. Ye know that, when1 ye were Gentiles, [ye were] led away unto the dumb idol as ye might be led. Wherefore I give you to know that no one speaking in [the] Spirit of God saith, Jesus [is] accursed, and no one can say, Lord Jesus,2 unless in [the] Holy Spirit. Now there are differences of gifts, but the same Spirit, and there are differences of services, and the same Lord, and there are differences of operations, but the same God3 that operateth all things in all.” (Vers. 16.)

The Authorized translation, with almost all others, inserts “gifts” after “spiritual” in the first verse; but this is scarcely comprehensive enough, for it does not properly contemplate the presence of the Spirit Himself, which clearly is far more momentous than any gift, and in itself distinct from them, they depending on Him rather than He on them. Hence “manifestations” has been suggested. But this, though better, seems inadequate to express the great truth in question, as we may learn from verse 7, where “the manifestation of the Spirit” refers to what is given to each, as distinct from the baptism of the Spirit, which forms all into one body. The sense is the entire range of what pertains to the Spirit; and if our language could bear “spirituals,” this would seem the best way of rendering . A Christian usage has already adopted “heavenlies” in Ephesians. There seems at least as much need for a similar modification here in Corinthians. There is no sufficient reason, with Locke and others, to suppose that spiritual men are meant here again, as in chapter 14:37, 2:15; Gal. 6. Compare verse 31 and 14:1. This would narrow the field even more than the common version, and thus be more objectionable still.

The apostle, then, would have them acquainted with the source, character, and object of all that flows from the Spirit in the assembly, and of His manifestation in each member of Christ. And, first he reminds them of their pitiable condition when heathen. They were led away to the dumb idols so familiar to all, as they happened to be led. Their own will, doubtless, wrought and exposed them to unseen beings, who availed themselves of those senseless objects of adoration. The more, therefore, did they need to learn what had a wholly different origin and intent. This brings in the criterion of the Holy Spirit, the confession of Jesus as Lord, in contrast with the aim of evil spirits, who said, ‘Curse on Jesus.' Alas! this was not confined to Gentiles, for so cried the Jews under Satan's influence at the late crisis of their history. It would be to lose much, however, to reduce this twofold test to such gross forms alone. We may justly infer that, as the Holy Spirit ever works to exalt Jesus, so does the enemy to degrade Him. And this appears to be the point here, not the ascertainment of true believers among professors, but the character of what is taught in the assembly, whether of God's Spirit or of Satan. So it is even in 1 John 4:2, 8 John 7.

Next, the apostle descends from this broad and absolute test, in which all true confessors must unite, to the varieties, and these in relation to their source and aim. “Now there are differences of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of ministries, and the same Lord; and there are differences of operations, but the same God that operateth all things in all.” It is not, on the one hand, the Trinity, as such, which we have here, though unquestionably “the Spirit” and “the Lord” could not be thus introduced if they were not God equally with the Father. But it is plain that our Lord appears not so much in His divine glory as the Son, but rather in the official position conferred on Him. And God is spoken of as such, not in His personal distinctiveness as Father. On the other hand, it is not a division into three classes of gifts, but the same thing in substance viewed in three relations: gifts, in relation to the Spirit, through whom they come; services, in relation to the Lord, under whom and for whose glory they are responsibly exercised; and operations or workings or effects, in relation to God, for it is God, and not man, that works the whole in all. Thus, if by the Spirit there be a gift, its exercise is a ministry or service of the Lord, by whose authority it is carried on; and it is God who works it all effectually. Compare 1 Cor. 3:5-9 and chapter 2.

Lectures on the Church of God, Lecture 2: "One Spirit."

1 Cor. 12:1-13.

MY task to-night is that which I am persuaded ought to be the business of every Christian man, not in word only, but in deed and in truth—to assert the rights of the Spirit of God in the church of God. I say, "to assert His rights;" for I assume here the personality of the Holy Ghost. It is needless now to give any proofs of this any more than of His Deity. These truths can be taken for granted, not as if there were not abundant proofs in the word of God, but because they are at present uncalled for. But it is another thing, beloved friends, when we speak of the rights of

the Holy Ghost—His proper sovereign action in the church, flowing from His personal presence as sent down from heaven. On this subject many find difficulties and obscurities; and great ignorance exists even among the children of God, and those too who may have been greatly blessed; in and by whom the Holy Ghost may have acted powerfully for the good of souls. Unless however we know this truth from God, unless we have it as a divine certainty in our souls, it is clear that whatever grave may do in giving us practical subjection, yet there must be much lost if we do not know the special ways in which it is the will of God that the Holy Ghost, present both in the individual and in the church of God, should be honored. On this theme—a large one for a single discourse—I propose now to enter.

Here too, as in treating of the "one body," I would show from God's word that which was always true of the Spirit, and which therefore has no special connection with the present time, in order that we may the better discern in what God is now manifesting Himself, and how it is that Christians—for of them I speak—are apt to be mistaken as to this. A mistake here is so much the more serious a thing, as it is a question of duly recognizing a divine person. If we maintain the title of the Holy Spirit to act as He will in the church, no question is raised about His work in souls from the beginning. No person intelligently acquainted with the Scriptures doubts the fact or its importance; neither is there the least thought, wish, or motive to do so. The Holy Spirit has always been the direct agent in whatever God Himself has undertaken. If we look at creation, the Spirit had His part there. If we look again at the elders who obtained a good report through faith, no believer questions for a moment that it was only by the operation of the Holy Ghost that man believed then as now. He wrought in Abel, Enoch, Noah, and in all others whom the Scriptures testify as the line of saints. So again when God espoused His people Israel, if He wrought in any especial fashion suited to the display of His glory in their midst, it was the Spirit of God who was the energetic power behind and within. It was He that wrought, for instance, from a Moses down to a Bezaleel, from Samson up to David. When we come to the prophets, it need scarcely be said it was under the power of the Holy Ghost that holy men of God spoke; the Spirit of Christ made them to be witnesses beforehand of His sufferings, and of His glories that were to follow, little as they might themselves understand His sufferings. Thus, in those who stand for present privileges, there is no disposition whatever to obscure, but on the contrary to give the fullest value to all that the Holy Ghost has ever wrought; for in truth there never was anything of God in which He did not work.

But when we come to the New Testament, a new thing comes to view. A despised, crucified, departing Son of man was a strange sound. (John 12:34.) They looked for Christ to abide forever, and to reign in glory and righteous blessing upon earth. But gradually, as man and Israel especially rejected Him, the truth—astonishing to the Jew—dawned more and more, that He, the Messiah and Son of God, was going to leave the earth. Gentiles, I am aware, think little of this; but do they therefore show superior wisdom? To the Jew it was a most startling announcement, and at first sight irreconcilable with the law and prophets. They had looked for Him, the promised One, and their hearts delighted in His presence: it was what kings and prophets had desired most earnestly. God had put the desire into their souls; but now that it was gratified in His coming, He is going to leave them, to sink down in sorrow and shame and death—the death of the cross! under man's, ay, and under God's, hand! And not merely this, but when He rose again—instead of maintaining His glory from the throne of His father David, and filling the earth with the blessedness that was foretold, and accomplishing, and more than accomplishing, all that their hearts had so fondly hoped was just about to dawn and forever brighten this world—He was about to leave the world in its darkness; at any rate, He was about to retire again to the heavens whence He came. But if He was about to go on high, it was not as He carne down; for as the Son of God He had come down to become man—"the Word was made flesh;" and now as man, risen from the dead, He was leaving the world to take His place at the right hand of God; and during His absence on high, He would send down the Holy Ghost in a way never before known. The Old Testament prepares the heart for a present Messiah, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost as the needed appropriate meed paid to the reign of the Messiah over the earth; but the Messiah, on His death and resurrection, disappearing from the view of the world that had cast Him out, entering into a new and heavenly scene, and the Holy Ghost sent down personally in His absence to be here while He was there—all this was something wholly unexpected by the Jew. If Gentiles do not turn aside and wonder at the great sight, it is certainly not from excess of spiritual feeling or intelligence. We may find of course the wonder of stupidity; but there is such a thing as no wonder, just because there is no real thought about it. I believe this is the reason why, if there be on the one hand the wonder of men who are surprised, there is a lack of wonder in others because they are too engrossed in earthly things to be really concerned.

Now this, next to Christ, is the central truth of the New Testament; but so far from its being the solid ground on which Christians are now walking, in point of fact all is reduced in their minds to a mere continuation of the influence which the Holy Ghost has always exerted. The consequence is, that all men who reject His special presence in person on earth as a consequence of redemption are driven into the most painful expedients in order to evade the plainest scriptures. I may just mention one case: it will perhaps startle some that such assertions should be made, and especially by a person of large reputation for spiritual knowledge. It will show where want of faith as to the great truth of the actual presence of the Holy Ghost in a way never experienced before lands those who oppose it systematically. In order to escape the clear intimation of a new and incomparable blessing in the shape of the Comforter, they allege that the Holy Ghost (who had always been given!) departed from the earth when the Lord was here, in order that the Lord should give Him once more on His own ascension to heaven. Thus, the time of the Saviour's presence on earth would be, not a bright and happy feast, but dearth as regarded the Spirit of God! I just name the thought, in order that you may see the excessive violence, not to say worse, to which unbelief reduces even intelligent men of God. Need I say, on the contrary, that those who surrounded the Saviour and were blessed by His teaching had all the Old Testament saints ever enjoyed, and a great deal more? The Holy Ghost had quickened their souls, like their predecessors, by giving them faith in Christ. Besides, the disciples had the Messiah's presence and the manifestation of grace and truth in Him, and all His words and ways. No doubt there was much they could not then bear, as the Lord Himself told them; but still they were as truly believers as any had ever been before them. The fact is that such reasoning is the puny effort of man to escape from the solemn truth of God.

The New Testament is most explicit. Our Lord first of all brings out the doctrine of the Spirit; and this as fully meeting the need of man to be born of the Spirit and to have the Holy Ghost, in order that he should be able to worship the Father in spirit and in truth. But more than this, He prepares the disciples for the mighty work in spreading the truth and the grace of God. The Holy Ghost was necessary for this; and accordingly we have it in chap. vii.-a scripture which it is impossible to escape. The Lord had put it in a figurative way, that out of the belly of him who believed should flow rivers of living water. "This spake he of the Spirit," (which should not be given to a person in order to make him believe, but) "which they that believe should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given], because that Jesus was not yet glorified." Lengthy reasoning on such a scripture would be a dishonor to the word of God. Where there is an obscurity, we may try to explain and illustrate; but where the language employed is plainer than any that could be substituted in its stead, I feel that it is due to Scripture simply to press that plain meaning.

In the later chapters of the same gospel again we have our Lord bringing out, not merely the fact that after the glorification of Jesus the Holy Ghost was to be given, as He had not been before; but, besides, we have His personal action, when sent and come, entered into fully and definitely. Hence in John 14 He is spoken of as the Comforter. Mark the importance of this. We may reason about the Holy Ghost being given, as if it meant no more than a spiritual power, but we cannot thus attenuate the sent Comforter. Who is He but the Holy Ghost Himself? No one can say that "Comforter" means a miracle, or a tongue, or any operation you please. Doubtless He works in all these various ways; but it is a real person who replaces the Messiah when He leaves the earth. Just read a few verses of the chapter in order that it be made still plainer: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." There again we have what is most evident. Miracles have been; tongues tease; prophecies and knowledge pass away; but here we have a divine person who abides with the saints forever—"even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." The world was bound to receive Jesus, and after an outward manner it had Him there; but here we find One who, not having become incarnate, could not in any way be brought before the eyes of the world. I admit of course that the world does not really receive Jesus in a spiritual manner any more than the Holy Ghost; but still there is a pointed reference to the manner of the Holy Ghost's presence here below, which excludes Him from all apprehension on the world's part as an object either of sight or of knowledge.

Again in John 14:26 we read, "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." It is not a gift or power or influence merely, but one who is really sent—a person who teaches all things and brings all the Lord's sayings to their remembrance. Then in chap. 15:26, "But when the Comforter is come." It is not merely in this case "sent" (because some might argue perhaps about the sending of an influence) but "come." "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth [in every way guarding this most weighty theme], which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." Assuredly we have the Holy Spirit's coming presented with solemnity and distinctness. In the former chapter the Father sends Him in Christ's name; in this Christ sends Hila from the Father. In the one case He is said to bring all things Christ had spoken to their remembrance; in the other He comes down from the Son, and bears witness of Him. They had been conversant with Him upon earth, and were to attest it as witnesses; also the Spirit from Him in heaven comes down, that there should be as it were these joint witnesses of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then in the sixteenth chapter of John we have the truth still further unfolded, and, if possible, with increasing energy, as it is indeed of the deepest interest and importance. In chapter 14. the Lord had told them that they ought to rejoice because He went to the Father. He was leaving a scene of humiliation and suffering to be in the home of the Father's love and glory. Had their love been simple, had they been thinking of Him, not of themselves, they would have rejoiced because He was going to the Father. But now in chapter 16. He puts it upon other ground "It is expedient for you [and not only as it were for me] that I go to the Father." What! expedient for those poor weak trembling disciples that He had watched over, in the face of all Israel who despised Him and would not be gathered to Film? Surely under His wing He had gathered those little ones, and sheltered them; yea, in the very hour of His own rejection He had turned His hand upon them. And now He must leave them. It was expedient for them that He should go to the Father. How could this be? There is but one answer; and it is the answer that the Lord gives. It is what in His mind made it expedient. Blessed as it was to have the Messiah, His presence (just because He was a man upon earth with a group of disciples around Him) was necessarily limited. He could not thus be as man everywhere throughout the earth. The Holy Ghost had not, like the Son, taken human nature into union with His person. But more than that, when redemption was effected, He could in the most intimate way bring into the hearts of the disciples all the value that flowed from Christ and His work—Christ exalted to heaven and estimated of God the Father there.

Thus then were the great foundations of truth laid. The Lord Jesus would not leave this world or go to the Father, until every question that God had with guilty man was settled forever. When sin was put away by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross, when righteousness was established in Christ risen from the dead and exalted on high, it was not merely all pure grave as before, but now it became a question of God's righteousness through the work of the Saviour. The efficacy of His blood turned the scale in favor of man; for it was the man Christ Jesus who had thus glorified God about sin. No doubt He was His own beloved Son, the inestimable gift of His own grace; and man could boast nothing, for He was despised and rejected of man—hated without a cause. Still, there was the fact that God had so looked down upon earth, more especially upon the cross, to find the man who suffered all, that God Himself might be glorified. This truth changed everything. Now it became a question, so to speak, for God: what could He do for this blessed man? If He was God's Son, was this a reason why He should love or exalt Him less? He raises up from the grave the man Christ Jesus, and sets Him at His own right hand. That was not only a personal act in honor of Christ, but for believers it is the measure, in infinite grace, of acceptance which is now theirs in virtue of Him. All heaven was filled with wonder and praise at the sight of man, made a little lower than the angels, taken up in the person of Christ far above all principalities and powers to sit on the throne of God. Yea God Himself from that moment has made it His business and delight to show His value for the man who, in the face of sin and death and Satan and divine judgment, retrieved all His character, and brought glory to His name in delivering, by suffering for, the guilty to the uttermost, Before this man had been the constant public agent in dishonoring God. Never was God so slighted, insulted, provoked by any of His creatures as by man. Satan, when he left his first estate, once and forever forfeited his place. There might still be a more terrible judgment awaiting him; but there was no mercy—no beam of hope pierced through the darkness into which sin plunged a fallen angel. But now, after man had preferred darkness to light, after his manifold course of rebellion against God was run, the tide was turned in the death of Christ, and God was placed by His work under an obligation, so to say, to man to bless him by faith through and in Christ the Lord.

Hence that expression of which The apostle Paul is so full "the righteousness of God." If man was more than ever proved to be lost, God now had a debt to pay. As a part of His discharge of it, He sets the Lord Jesus as man at His own right hand; He justifies freely and fully every believer; and He sends down the Holy Ghost in order that He might be the divine link between that blessed Man in glory and those who believed in Him, even such as had trembled at the thought of His departure. What a change there is now! Not only was there spiritual intelligence now, but power also. Peter, who had denied the Lord, could now stand boldly forward and say, "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just." They were all dumb. His denial was completely gone, and I might venture to say with more glory to the Lord than if he had never uttered it. A positive strength and triumph glowed in his soul, a knowledge not only of his own weakness and worthlessness, but of God, of resurrection, and of His grace—a sense of what Christ was for him that was beyond all he had ever known before. I do not say beyond grace, unless Peter had done what he did; but surely there was immense force in his words. They knew well what he had done, publicly done, in the high priest's hall, and before people ready enough to see the faults of a disciple. Yet he who repeatedly and recently denied his Lord was, through abundance of grace, so full of courage as to stand forth and confront and tell them that it was they that "denied the Holy One and the Just." His conscience was purged; he had no more conscience of sins (Heb. 10): all was blotted out that could be against him before God. Yea

he was justified from all things.

This was merely one fruit, precious as it was; and out of what did it grow? Peter had been a believer before, and was already born anew: what then was its spring? It was part of the result of the great salvation made good in the power of the Spirit of God come down from heaven, and thus working in Peter. No doubt there was previous moral exercise, deep penitence for his sins, and the restoration of his soul; but more than all this followed,—the gift and positive power of the Spirit. It is here, though not here only, that the church shows its weakness through unbelief To the believer it is not a mere negative question now, but one of real present power; as was said of Timothy—who needed to be reminded of the fact—that it was not a spirit of fear he had received, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

But now we must return to the great truth: the Lord Jesus, in John 14, 15, 16, shows what was to replace His personal presence upon earth—a real divine Paraclete—He whom we call the third person in the Trinity. I do not however admire the expression "second" or "third" person; and for this reason, that it tends to bring in a subordination in the Godhead where scripture does not. You cannot have a secondary God. You may bring human reasonings into the subject, and talk about a son, and his subjection to his father; but therein is the very thing which is so dangerous, and of which, to my mind, the devil has taken great advantage. The scripture shows that the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God; that they are one and all equally Jehovah. Subordination in respect of Deity is only a means of undermining the proper Godhead of the Son and the Spirit. The notion of subordination is true only when we look at the place of manhood the Son deigned to take, or at the office the blessed Holy Ghost is now filling to the glory of the Son, just as the Son served and will yet reign to the glory of God the Father.

To return, however—the Lord Jesus tells us it was expedient that He should go away;—"For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." Any particular notice of this scripture is not the point now, but rather the general truth. This was the twofold purpose of the Holy Ghost in coming here below. He proves that the world was under sin; that there is no righteousness here, but only in the Just One with the Father; and that as to the prince of this world, he is judged—the sentence not executed, but he judged. There was hope for the world with the Jew; but now, from the point of view in which the Lord speaks of His own going and the Holy Ghost's coming, the world is evidently lost, and the Spirit here is but its reprover. Next, this same Holy Spirit should lead the disciples into the truth, taking of the things of Christ, and glorifying Him. There is thus a double relation of the Holy Ghost to the world, as a system outside and condemned; to the saints, whom He leads, telling them of things to come, yea, of all things pertaining to Christ and His glory. Such is the plain doctrine of the Apostle John as to the Spirit.

Thence we come to the Acts of the Apostles: is there anything there that, as a matter of fact, answers to our Lord's promises? There need not be a doubt. In chapter 1. the disciples are with the Lord, entering but very feebly into that which had filled His heart before He went away. They were still looking for the kingdom with great things for the earth and for Israel. They were not, it is true, sunk so low as the unbelieving thoughts of Gentile Christendom—i.e., a millennium without Christ! the shame of those who boast so proudly in our day; but still they were not far raised above the ordinary thoughts of Jews. They did not yet enter into the precious Christian hope, and for this simple reason: the thoughts of the Christian are the thoughts of heaven. They are the communications of the Holy Ghost that suit the Father, because centering in the Son and His heavenly glory. Into that communion we are brought; and truly it is not merely with the prophets and with their blessed visions of coming glory for the earth, but "with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." But as for the disciples in Acts 1. the power of entrance was not yet there, for the Holy Ghost was not personally come; and yet they had not only life at this time, but life in resurrection. The Lord had actually breathed upon them the very day He rose, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" Of course this was not the gift of the Comforter as such, the promised One that was to take the place of Christ upon earth; but rather the communication by the Holy Ghost of His own risen life. Therefore, I believe, did He breathe upon them: a clear allusion to the Lord God breathing on Adam. Of old it was the breath of natural life given to Adam. Here was One upon earth who was both Lord and God (as acknowledged by Thomas a little after), and also the risen man or last Adam, the quickening Spirit. Accordingly, He communicates this life as life must always be communicated, by the Holy Ghost; and therefore it is said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" But for all that, we know from Acts 1. that the Spirit, the Comforter, was not yet come. Indeed, we ought to gather it from the simple fact, that the Lord was not yet gone. "And if I go not away, the Comforter will not come." He was seen there; and He commands them, when assembled together, that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father. Whatever the blessing, then, they had received on the resurrection-day, it was not the accomplishment of the promise of the Father.

The next chapter shows us the Holy Ghost acting on earth in the absence of Christ; and this in various ways. It records that extraordinary display of divine grace in the gift of tongues, which, without removing, surmounted the confusion that man's sin and divine judgment had brought into the world in the various nations and tribes and tongues, which have subsisted since Babel to this day. Now the Spirit was going out with the news of God's wonderful works of grace to all, just as they were proving that where sin had abounded, grave much more abounded. At the same time let us not forget that new tongues, although the magnificent fruit of the Spirit's operation, are not the same thing as His presence; they were an effect and characteristic sign of a crucified but now exalted Lord, the witness of gospel grace and its universal testimony in contrast with the law, but not the same thing as the gift of the Holy Ghost Himself. This is exceedingly important, because the unbelief of some has gone so far as to think and say that if the tongues exist no more, the Holy Ghost is absent. What blindness to the Saviour's promise! What a lowering of the Spirit's presence What denial of Christianity and the church! The truth is, that the tongues, and the other powers in which the Spirit of God was pleased then to work, were but the miraculous tokens that befitted His presence, besides inaugurating the gospel and the church. It was all a new and unprecedented state of things. When the Son was on earth, miracles followed His steps and word, as it was only meet, and the accomplishment of prophecy. Another divine person being come, was it not suitable there should be proofs of it, more especially as He took no permanent form, as the San of God had done, so as to be visible? It was therefore the more needed that there should be palpable effects and tokens arresting the mind, and causing the heart of man to weigh what God is and is doing, not only as displayed in the Son, but as witnessed by the Holy Ghost present upon earth.

This is the cardinal truth upon which all hinges that we find in the great body of the New Testament. There was now before men a fact without precedent, altogether unknown to the world, if it did not surprise even those that had been taught by the Lord Himself to expect it—the wondrous fact that the Holy Ghost had come down in person, making His presence known by a signature of gracious power, so as to be then known and read of all men. Accordingly throughout the Acts of the Apostles you have ever and anon the testimony not only to His action and

its results, but to the glorious truth that He Himself was there. Look at the first outbreak of the world's religious rancor in chapter 4. and His answer to it in verse 31. Take again the first public sin and scandal, where Ananias and Sapphira were charged on the spot with lying not to man but to God. But how was this proved? They had lied to the Holy Ghost who was there. The standard of judgment was that dishonored person who was in their midst. This measure of sin, let me say, is as true individually as it is in the church. Hence, in Eph. 4:30, it is not merely that you should not violate this or that command, but "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Let us note it well.

The more this is reflected upon, the more its immense moment will be felt by the children of God. Supposing you take the presence of one you most value and delight in, does not his or her coming affect all your ways and words just in proportion as you realize and love their presence? We might be ever so much at ease; but still, if there be one staying with us, who draws out our honor and esteem, the influence is felt deeply and at once except by a stone. Surely one does think of that which will give pleasure; one rightly fears to wound; the heart is on the alert and active, and it is a joy to do that which will gratify those we love. And so in virtue of redemption the Holy Ghost is here, because as regards each believer all is gone that was offensive to God; and the saint stands in divine righteousness before God—become this in Christ. How indeed could the Holy Ghost be away? He must have His part when that which was most precious to God and man was wrought. If the Father accomplished His thoughts in and by the Son, could the Holy Ghost be absent or inactive? And now God had done His greatest work—the atoning work of Christ. Where therefore the blood of the accepted sacrifice is, the Holy Ghost not only can work but must dwell. If Christ by His own blood has entered in once for all into the holies, having found an everlasting redemption, the Holy Ghost is come to abide with us forever. All hangs on and is measured by this. Accordingly the book of the Acts is far more the acts of the Holy Ghost than of the apostles, important vessels of His power as they were, though not they only. We have seen, where it was a question of sin, He judges by His presence and acts upon this ground. We have seen that, when they were in danger of being alarmed by the threats of man, the Spirit gave cheering evidence of His mighty presence. It was not merely Peter and John, or anybody else; but the place was shaken where they were. Whose presence was this, or in whom particularly? It was the presence of the Holy Ghost, not merely in this or in that individual, but in the assembly of God. More than that, the Spirit of God in chapter 13. of the Acts takes an active place, and sends out Paul and Barnabas. "Separate me:' He says," Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." “So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed." I am now referring to the case only to show that it is not a question of miracles, tongues, or powers, but of a real divine person, who was the chief agent as present in the church of God; and that this personal presence of the Spirit in man was a new thing, previously unexampled in the plan and ways of God. (Compare also Acts 8:29, 39; Acts 15:28; 16:7; 20:23; 21:11.)

Now we come to the Epistles, passing by the scriptures which attest the Holy Ghost's presence in the individual. All-important as this is, it is not my subject, but His presence in the church. Hence we must omit the Epistle to the Romans, which takes up our individual relation towards God, and for the simple reason that there we are regarded as His children. We are brought out of the place of wrath and sin, made children of God, and if children, then heirs: the Holy Ghost gives the spirit of adoption, and fills the heart with hopes of the inheritance which is to follow. But in the Epistles to the Corinthians you have not merely the state of man and the revelation of divine righteousness, with their consequences in sinners and saints, as in Romans, but the church of God, in a grievous state of sin, shame, and disorder, but still the church of God. Accordingly the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as there dwelling is shown as in its capital seat. The portion read (1 Cor. 12:1-13) developes His action in the church. What can be plainer? Here we have the Holy Ghost viewed as a real person present and working in gifts of outward sign, no doubt, as well as in ways of edification. But whatever might be the form of His action, the great truth was that He was there and at work in the many members of God's assembly. The question is, was all this a temporary display, or was His presence forever the substratum of it all? Was that which we here read confined to a particular local assembly and a special epoch long past, or is there anything for us, for the church of God at, large, for this time and all times? The answer cannot be doubtful, if we are subject to the word of God. Certainly our Lord had in John 14 laid down, in contrast with His own temporary absence, that the Spirit of truth was to abide with His disciples forever.

But next the First Epistle to the Corinthians could not open without the Holy Ghost's giving it the most enlarged application. In the first verse of the first chapter we read, "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." This is not said in the Second Epistle: indeed I am not aware that there is anything exactly like it anywhere else in the New Testament. Are we to suppose this was a mistake? Let who will be guilty of such a speech or thought, I trust there is no soul here that would not denounce it as a sin against God. A mistake in the word of God! On the contrary it seems to me to be the special wisdom and goodness of the Spirit who foresaw the unbelief of Christendom; it was the Spirit of God who knew that this Epistle would be treated as if it were of private application, as if it belonged to a bygone time and place, and did not appertain to all that call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ— "both theirs and ours." This He has guarded against at the very threshold, and made such an objection to be plain fighting against the word of God. Thus it ceases to be a question of opinion. God has spoken and has written that we may believe Him; and this epistle has a purposely enlarged scope, so that unbelief as to the perpetuity of the Holy Ghost's action in the assembly, as long as He and it are here, should be treated as a sin, as a positive rejection of God's plain word. Is it not unbelief which makes null and void the Holy Ghost's personal presence in the church?

It is not at all contended that the Holy Ghost necessarily works in every way as of old, and still less in the same measure of power. In the latter part of the New Testament we do not read much about miracles —very little—less and less too as time passes on. We can understand that, in the opening of a new dealing of God, there should be, in His goodness, a wonderful working and display of these mighty powers to awaken the attention even of careless men. But, as the truth of His presence was established, and the new communications of God were gradually written, and there was thus not merely the evidence of outward tokens, but positive scripture committed to human responsibility, we can easily see that external vouchers were no longer so requisite, and that the Spirit of God (grieved, as we know, by much found in those who professed the name of Christ) might gradually withdraw, not Himself, but the manifestation of mighty signs, and refuse to put outward ornaments upon that which dishonored the Lord Jesus.

It is certain and evident, at least when we come to the churches of the Apocalypse, that we see or hear no more of the powers of the age ta come. Not a doubt have I that there was the wisdom of God in thus ordering in view of the state of things that was fast coming in. I think we can readily discern by spiritual considerations why it would not have been suitable to the glory of God to continue those miraculous powers. Supposing, for instance, God watt to work now in the way of miracle, is it not evident that in one of two ways it must be? Either He must work wherever the name of Christ is preached and known at an; and what would be the consequence of this? Miracles in Rome, miracles in Canterbury, miracles among Presbyterians, Independents, Wesleyans, Baptists, Pædo-baptists, Calvinists, Arminians, Lutherans: Greek church and all sects and denominations in Christendom would have their miracles! There may be those who would enjoy the sight, but I envy them

not. Every one here, I trust, would feel deeply the anomaly of such an outward seal on such a masa of confusion. On the other hand, supposing God were pleased to say that He could not give these tokens of His power and glory where the church was thus in disorder and rebellion, but must single out—whom shall I say? It could not be, it ought not to be: God forbid that we ourselves should desire it, as things are.

But let us for the moment imagine the Lord looking on any children of God anywhere gathered, and saying, "I see where My people are subject to My word; and where I find two or three here and there gathered unto My name, there I will work miracles." What would be the consequence? We should not know how to behave ourselves! So weak are we, so foolish, so apt to be full of ourselves, even now in the face of continual weakness, as well as hatred and contempt, that we should not be able to contain ourselves if we had these displays of divine power. Besides, what a slight to those we own to be as truly members of Christ, and as truly indwelt of the Spirit, as any of us!

I am persuaded then there is perfect grace and wisdom as to this in the ways of God. He no longer works thus. But here is the truth on which I take my stand this night: the Holy Ghost was given, not merely as a display of power in the earth, but, if I may so say, as both sign and substance of the divine value for the cross. God the Father gave the Holy Ghost as the seal of that redemption which is always unchangeably perfect and infinitely efficacious. I dare to say it, and yet I say it with all reverence, that if the Holy Ghost were now taken from the poorest and feeblest of His saints upon earth, it would not be a dishonor to him so much as to the Son of God and His atoning work. It would be virtually to say that the ruin of the church has made the blood of Christ less precious; but will God ever confirm a lie? And here is the stronghold of faith—in this we can be confident—not only that the Lord Jesus has expressed the mind and intentions of God, but that we through His grave can and ought to enter in measure into its ground, reason, character, and aim, as well as meaning.

All this we may by faith appreciate and enjoy, for He has explained it to us. Wherefore indeed is the word of God given, if it be not that we should understand His mind, feel His love, and be sure of His truth, wisdom and goodness? Hence we are aware that God, in sending the Spirit to abide always whatever may be the sorrowful condition of believers individually and collectively, did not give a mere token of approving them, but rather the only adequate pledge of His delight in the personal work of His beloved Son. The Holy Ghost, we know, descended on Christ when He was upon earth without blood, because He was always sinless, as perfect here morally as He was and is in heaven, no less absolutely holy as man than as God. It is not forgotten, of course, that He had yet to be made perfect in another sense, as becoming captain and author of salvation, and to be consecrated as heavenly priest. It is clear that there was a work to be done, and an official place of glory to be taken; but nothing ever did or could add to His moral perfectness. Hence, I repeat, He could and did receive the Holy Ghost for Himself as man without blood. But when Christ went up on high, He received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost. What amazing comfort, confidence, and rest should this give us! Had the Holy Ghost been given directly to us, we might well think that, if we did not carry ourselves as we ought, there might be a revocation. We can understand a soul troubled with such a thought; but, thanks be to God, the Father gave the Holy Ghost a second time to Christ. When He went on high, He received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, and shed forth that which was seen and heard at Pentecost. Thus the gift is entirely in virtue of Christ, after He had blotted out our sins and received it as a consequence. There we have the firmest and surest ground on which the perpetuity of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the saint and in the church rests before God—His love to Christ, and His estimate of Christ's work for us, not to speak of His immutable word.

And now for a few practical words on this before I have done. We shall have other applications and results of it in subsequent lectures, so that the less may be said now. If there be a divine person on earth who is now in each saint individually, and with all as the church of God, I ask, Can this be a secondary consideration? Is this a truth that can be subordinated to circumstances? Is it something that can be pushed aside for the sake of not disturbing oneself or others? Can men who so think, and speak, and act, believe in the reality of the Spirit's personal presence and present operation according to scripture? Do they know that the Holy Ghost is really in the church on earth? I am not now, of course, alluding to His divine glory whereby He fills all things, because it is always true, —as true before Christ carne as it has been since, and equally true of all the persons in the Trinity. But as the Son carne down from heaven and was here a man for some thirty or more years upon the earth but is actually gone, so now the Holy Ghost is come down personally to abide with and in us in such sort as was unknown before, cave only in Christ. The Holy Spirit, I say, has come now to be in us personally; and just as Christ was God's only true temple, so now the church is the temple of God; for both these truths are taught in the word of God. But if this be believed, if it be received as God's truth, what can compare with it in importance as a present practical fact, as well as privilege, for the saint and for the church? Accordingly the responsibility of Christians, if we apply it to their meeting, is that their assemblies should be governed by the truth that the Holy Ghost is there.

But how does the Holy Ghost work when owned as there? This we have answered, if it were only in the scripture already real. He distributes, or divides, to every one severally as He will. Is His presence then not to be recognized? Is His working not to be respected? What do we find, if we test the present aspect of Christendom by the word of God? It is far from my desire needlessly to trouble any one, nor is it my wish to provoke controversy; but there are truths which manifestly admit of no compromise: indeed, all divine truth refuses such unworthy dealing. How, then, I would ask, is it with our souls in the feeling, in the faith, in the allegiance that we pay to this truth, so vital to the church, so essential to the right honoring of the Holy Ghost and of the Lord Himself? Do you doubt that the church of God is in disorder? Where is the serious-minded Christian that does not own it more or less? Is there a spiritual man who would maintain that the present state of the church answers to what we read in the New Testament? Am I not to feel and to humble myself before God for my own and the church's sin in this grave matter? Must I not seek to be where the Holy Ghost's presence is owned? It matters not where I have been ignorantly; I have doubtless been where there was not even the show of owning His presence and action according to the scriptures; I may have joined others in praying God to pour out again the Holy Ghost, as if He were not come and in the church of God. And do you call such prayer as this a scriptural recognition of His presence? What can be conceived a more decided or more evident ignoring of the truth that the Holy Ghost is here? Were it prayed that the Spirit of God might not be grieved, or that the saints might be filled with Him, it were scriptural. What would it have been for a disciple in the presence of Jesus to have asked the Father to send His Son?—to raise up the Messiah when the Messiah was actually there? Is it not the spirit of the world, which cannot receive the Spirit, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him? But we know Him-at least we ought to know Him. Well, if we do know that He is here, is it a light thing whether or not we are subject to His operation in the church? It is in vain to say, "I acknowledge the truth of His presence;" so much the worse, if I am not subject to the scripture, which leaves no doubt how He acts for Christ's glory. Mere words do not suffice: God looks for faithfulness, for subjection to His word, for practical recognition of the presence of the Holy Ghost.

We come together, it may be ever so few: what do we count on? We are weak and ignorant, but we have One in our midst who knows all things, and is the source of all power. Are we content with Him? Can we confide in Him in the face of dangers and difficulties? Why is it that

the church is weak? Why is it that there is such want of power and joy and peace and comfort among the children of God? Can it be wondered at? What I wonder at is rather the mercy and astonishing patience of God, blessing as He does in spite of so much unbelief. Do you really suppose that it can be an indifferent thing to God? Does He not call for my unhesitating adhesion to His will, duly owning His Spirit's presence and free action? What about your bowing down to the great present fact, that in virtue of redemption and in honor of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Ghost is here personally in the church on earth? This puta the soul to the test; indeed, it seems to me the great test for Christians. Christ, of course, abides the practical touchstone for everything and every person; but still if He is known and valued by my soul as the way, the truth, and the life, is it nothing to Him that my ways in the church of God should be on the ground He has given me—faith in the presence of the promised Holy Ghost? Is it not the truth God Himself presupposes as the very soul, the animating spring, of the church?

This does not in the slightest degree touch God's working by individuals. He sends out one to preach the gospel to the world, He raises up another to edify the children of God. This is another branch of truth; and I refer to it now only to show that, when we contend for the church's inalienable obligation to own the presence of the Holy Ghost, this does not in the least interfere with the individual action of the Spirit in ministry. Granting this in all its integrity and importance, I would put the question to the conscience of each before me, Where is there an assembly of God's saints coming together, and His Spirit left perfect liberty of action that He may employ whom He will as the vessels of His power? Are there any Christians here present who never thus find themselves in the only assembly which God's word sanctions? If there are, I can only say, Ponder that word with prayer, and ask your soul how comes this? You, a member of God's assembly, yet you never know that assembly gathered according to scripture, or the action of the Spirit proper to it!

You, a member of Christ's body, yet the Holy Ghost never allowed to use you, or other members of it, to the glory of Christ and the edification of your brethren! If it be so, how comes it? Why should you go on thus?

It is granted that there are serious questions here, and many obstacles; and I am sure we ought to pray much for those that are thus perplexed and encumbered. Let me not disguise from them what it costs in this world to be true to the Lord and the unerring word of God. It is not for any one (the Lord keep us far from it!) to look lightly or coldly on those who are in this grievous trial: we may have known some of its bitterness ourselves. What do we desire for God's children? Nothing less than their deliverance, yea, of every one. Do not all saints who rest upon the redemption of Christ belong to the body? Has not God set them as it pleased Him in His church? And what are we doing? Are we gathering together to improve on the Spirit's action in the church of God? God forbid: rather is it to honor the Lord in the assurance that He is in our midst. Our only true reason, if we have a divine reason at all, for meeting together in the name of the Lord Jesus, is that it is His own will and way; it is to please Him. And if it has been done at cost, God blesses this greatly, and blesses it too to the softening of the spirit quite as much as to the exercise of faith: if it is not so, there is something wrong with our souls. Am I, then, as the center of my church-action cleaving to the presence of the Holy Ghost? If I am not, I have not got God's center for mine, and am still under the dominion of tradition in some shape or another; carrying on either what my father did, or something else that suits my mind better: but where is God in all this?

You may be taunted, as we all know, with bigotry and exclusiveness. Did these censors ever weigh what either means? I call bigotry an unreasonable attachment, without solid divine warrant, to one's own particular doctrine or practice in defiance of all others. Allow me to ask, Is it bigotry to give up one's most cherished associations because of God's word, in order to do His will? Is it exclusive to abandon sects, one and all, in order to be always and only where I can meet all saints according to the word, and in dependence on the Holy Ghost, gathered unto Christ's name? I am not assuming this for any one who does not own scripture as the unchanging truth of God; but I ask you who do, are you to allow yourselves to depart from the known ground of God, no matter what may be the trial within or the temptation without you? There are often attachments of other kinds that create difficulty. Friends may ask you to go here or there for once at any rate; and it seems hard to refuse, especially as they understand not the force of a divine conviction, which they lack themselves. You invite them, perhaps, to come with you, and you decline going with them. Does it not look proud and unbrotherly? Well, it may seem singular to them, but it ought to be perfectly plain to you; it may be real humility, and love too, haughty and unkind as rash ignorance counts it.

Let us conceive a godly church man or dissenter to put this plain question: "How is it that you, who are so free and hearty in receiving Christians in the name of Christ, will not come with me to my church or chapel?" The answer is, "On your own principles, as a Protestant Christian, you can come here with a good conscience, where we are sure the one desire is to be subject to the Lord and His word, in the unity of His body, and in the liberty of His Spirit. You surely acknowledge it is no sin to meet as we do, according to scripture, and therefore you can meet with us. But I, for my part, am clear that it is unscriptural to desert the scriptural ground for that of dissent or Anglicanism, and therefore it is not want of love but fear of sin that keeps me from going with you, who do not pretend to be meeting on the ground of God's assembly." Surely he is a bigot or worse who would urge or expect me to join him against my positive conviction, that in so doing I should sin against God. Sin is a man doing his own will, or another's, which is not God's. If you ask me to depart from what I know to be the will of God, it would of course be sin in me to comply. It is not only a thing that is sinful in itself, but it would be most especially a sin in me, because I know, if you are ignorant, that it is infidelity to the Spirit's operation in the church.

Be not moved, then, by reproaches, any more than by fair speeches. For there is no real love, save in obeying God. (1 John 5:2-3.) Never swerve from what you believe to be His will. You may have come in at first little acquainted with the truth or with the solemn responsibilities it involves; perhaps it was on that slender reason that you were here converted: but how is it with you now? Have you been searching the word of God to ascertain His mind and will? Do you see the presence and action of the Holy Ghost in the assembly to be the truth of God? Is it not perfectly plain and sure that God has sent clown His Spirit, and that this truth has to be owned and acted upon by you and all Christians? That truth1 you cannot deny; you know very well it is of God; you may not value it as you ought, (who does?) but this is another thing. The Lord grant that we may all value it more and increasingly.

Search the Scriptures, examine the word of God for your own souls; by this means we obtain true spiritual intelligence, but this only in obedience, and we do not want it otherwise. The intelligence that is gathered in disobedience seems to me perilous and untrustworthy; to learn the truth, step by step acting it out, is a happier and holier path, and of simpler faith too. At the same time that we value intelligence, we must remember that there is another thing yet more important—single-eyed subjection to the will of God, even if we seem to be unintelligent about much. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." That scripture is not out of date; and I believe such is the divine and therefore the best way, as a beginning. There is blessedness in gradually growing up into the truth of God, above all looking to Him that we walk in that which we know.

For the present, I pray the Lord that the great truths of the "one body" and "one Spirit," which have been before us, may be brought home by His own power; so that all of us who know them may be cheered and confirmed, and that those who are ignorant may be taught them of Himself.

Examining and Judging Ourselves, Examining and Judging Ourselves

(1 Cor. 11:28 and 2 Cor. 13:5)

What do these passages teach? 1 Cor. 11:28-31, the duty, need and value of each Christian testing himself by the solemn truth of the Lord's death expressed and confessed and enjoyed in His supper. How slur over sin of any kind, were it but levity in word or deed, in presence of that death in which it came under God's judgment unsparingly for our salvation? Nor is it enough to confess our faults to God or man, as the case may require; but as on the one hand we discern the body, the Lord's body, in that holy feast of which we are made free and which we can never neglect without dishonoring Him who thus died for us, so on the other hand we are called to examine (or, discern) ourselves, scrutinizing the inward springs and motives of all, and not merely the wrong which appears to others. But this intimate self-searching, to which we are each called who partake of the Lord's Supper, is on the express ground of faith, and has no application whatever to an unbeliever. This last thought has been mischievously helped on by the rendering of "damnation" in verse 29, which verses 30-32 clearly refute-proving that the judgment in question is the discipline of sickness or death which the Lord wields over careless or faulty saints in positive contrast with the condemnation of the world.

As for the passage in 2 Cor. 13, the statement, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith," derives all its force from the certainty that those appealed to were in the faith, not in the least that they were uncertain. That they were in the faith through Paul's preaching ought to have been an unanswerable proof that Christ spoke through him; if Christ was not in them, they were reprobate; and was it for such to question his apostleship? Scripture never calls a soul to doubt, always to believe. But self-judgment is ever a Christian's duty; and our privileges, we being in ourselves what we are, only deepen the importance, as representing Christ, of dealing with ourselves truly and intimately before God, as well as reminding our souls habitually of the Lord's death and of its infinite and solemn import as shown forth in His Supper.

(From “Notes on 2 Corinthians,” by William Kelly. G. Morrish, London; 1882. P. 241-242)

The Lord's Supper, Lord's Supper, The: Part 2

1 Corinthians 11:20

When the Lord Jesus died, rose, and went to heaven, then from His ascension glory He gave gifts to men. It was a new source of supply from above. What He did when on earth was to send a testimony to Israel. The disciples were even forbidden to preach to the Samaritans or to the Gentiles: this therefore could not be Christian ministry. No doubt eleven of the disciples previously used were again sent forth now, but they had a fresh mission when Christ went up to heaven. Has Christ then, I ask, ceased to give gifts to men? or is He still owned by us as the Head of the church, not in word only but in deed and in truth? And those who in practice and principle deny this and take His place, are they not really conspiring against Him and His rights as the fountain of all gifts for the church? Rome is the chief of the conspiracy against the Headship of Christ—the harlot who rises up in insubjection to the Lord of all. Babylon—the false lady, the would-be-queen—was not content to be subject, and she is therefore looked upon as an enemy going to be judged by God. Take care that you do not fall into the same error of disowning the Headship of Christ in another form.

So far from questioning Christian ministry, I hold it to be a divine institution and a permanent one. If others plead for change, I hold that, if divine, it is the same now as when Christ first ascended. Christ, and Christ alone, through the Holy Ghost, has authority in His hands. He gives gifts, and appoints ministers. I feel it to be a part of my work in His name to recall the saints to what they have forgotten by making the church regulate ministers, instead of bowing to Christ in this matter. Christ alone has the title as Head of His church; and the Holy Ghost is come down as alone competent to carry out His mind on earth in accordance with the written word of God.

But I want you to see that, while we would hold up the place of Christian ministry, and slight none who are Christ's ministers—owning all who are really His, and disowning all who are not—while we maintain this to the full, still there is one occasion where all distinctions disappear, where only One is or ought to be prominent, even Christ and His grace to us; where, no matter what our position and standing in the church, everything for the time gives place to Christ and His death; and this occasion is the Lord's Supper. It is precious to merge all else and have nothing before the soul but Himself who died for us in infinite love. This it is the Lord, (the night before He was betrayed) commended to the saints. This it is He would have us to do in remembrance of Him till He comes. It is well even for the most richly gifted not always to be in the position of giving out; and it is well for the poorest saints not to be ever taking in. An evangelist might else get so occupied with winning the souls of others as to forget he has a soul of his own to praise and remember the Lord; and so with every other gift. “They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.” It is good for the heart of any man, no matter what his gift, that all should have for Christ the Lord a little quiet time, and that these quiet times should not be too far apart.

All this is provided for amply in the Lord's Supper. It is blessed and wholesome for the soul to have seasons when it is occupied neither with delivering nor with hearing a sermon. It is blessed when even the apostle is merged in the saint, when we and all are called to be occupied only with the remembrance of Christ. There is a feast provided by His love, in which we all may enjoy Him together, and enjoy Him to the full; for He does not want us to treat His love as a doubtful thing, or an uncertain sound. On the contrary, He would have our joy to be full; but if you do not value this feast, because of its own nature and His love who invites you, no wonder you do not enjoy it. If you join in a rite which bears His name but with its character altered, how can you expect it to be the feast to which He invites you and guarantees His presence? Some make an idol of the Eucharist and worship its elements; others, running away from the idolatry of Rome, seem to have forgotten His word and to have put His supper nowhere, save as a gloomy appendix to the sermon and that once or twice a year.

The early disciples came together not once a month, nor once a quarter, nor once a year, but the first day of the week to break bread. And I assure you it is not myself or others who have put this into God's word. It is no strange Bible, but your own from which I am reading to you. It is no new theory or notion of moderns or ancients, but what God has written. Does it not concern you as much as me? I am speaking of Christ's feast for His disciples, for what in a special way concerns you, children of God, though Christ and His glory even more.

I remember the time when the Lord's Supper was a thing of awe and dread, lest one might fall into the condemnation that is written here—eat and drink “damnation,” being guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. No wonder a person with so fearful a danger before him could not enjoy the Lord's Supper; and being a believer, with no one to show me any better, it was so much the more a tremendous burden to me. It was no feast, but a fast of the most solemn description. Was it not a perverting of the Lord's Supper to produce such a result? Of course it was. Nor was mine at all a singular case. Think me not wandering away from what is of importance for souls in giving you this bit of personal experience. Somewhat similar alas! is the condition of many a soul now.

But the Lord Jesus died on the cross to suffer for the sins of believers and to blot them out. Yea, He glorified God about sin itself, instead of leaving it to stand as a perpetual reproach to God. He, the Son of God, having gone down Tinder it in love, and risen again without it in righteousness, from His ascension glory gave these words to Paul for us. They come, in the infinite grace of God from the Lord and Savior who bears witness to judgment borne for us, from resurrection accomplished, from the ascension revealed to us in all its glory: thence the Lord commends to us this institution of His grace. Do not treat it as a mere commandment, and hence a means of grace for those who have not faith. It is a call of love, embracing all who are His, and only for His, by faith: “Do this in remembrance of Me!” It is not for those who, slighting His love, love Him not.

For whom it is, need I argue more? The only persons who have the smallest title to the Lord's Supper are those who are resting on Him and His redemption. You might even be converted, and not be in a fit state to partake of this feast. For the Christian state is more than being converted (that is, by grace turned from one's evil ways to God). Besides this, the Christian believes the gospel of his salvation; he has peace with God, being justified by faith. He is not waiting for righteousness, but made the righteousness of God in Christ. He is therefore waiting for the hope of righteousness, that is, for glory. We do not get righteousness when we go to heaven. It is here by grace we have it, the object being to glorify Christ when we are in. the presence of His enemies and now called to serve Him. It is here we are to confess by faith in His cross and glory, how truly all the evil is already judged, all the good is already given in Christ by our God and Father.

What does a person come to the table of the Lord for? Is it to pour out his doubts? If he has them, he will; but this would be to make it a fast, and not a feast. You would scarcely like this even at your own festivities. You would not like to have at a marriage feast one with a gloomy heart and face: this would slight the bridegroom and the bride, and might spoil it for every one else. You would say such a person was best away; and the more you loved the person, the less you could desire his presence thus, because his sadness would be the more a burden to all concerned. It would be a poor proof of love to be indifferent to his troubles, and to be just as joyful in presence of such a breach of fellowship, not to speak of propriety.

The soul that is troubled with doubts and fears had better look to Christ and listen to God's gospel. The Lord's Supper is the best and the holiest feast on earth; but whatever does not consist with His presence in peace and liberty and love is not fit for it.

Ministry is not meant to furnish, adorn, or guard the table; even an apostle comes there merely as a saint. Ministry has to deal with souls, to preach the gospel, to give meat in due season, to guide, instruct, correct and rebuke. But in the Lord's Supper we rightly come only as members of Christ's body—as once sinners but now saints, justified, made happy because of Christ's love, full of peace and joy in believing. We are walking in the light: such is the place of a Christian; but the next point is that we should walk in accordance with the light in which we are. This is the object of ministry, in dealing with saints to fit them for and keep them in their place at the Lord's table. Thus the Lord's Supper is the present practical end, we may say, of ministry; and the end is greater than the means.

I should scruple to call it the Lord's Supper when it is not taken according to the Lord's own institution. But we may notice that there is a difference in the way in which the apostle speaks in 1 Cor. 10 as compared with the language in chap. xi.: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” In this passage it is not the Lord's Supper viewed from within, i.e., not the state, of those partaking it. Neither their right state nor their wrong state is the point here discussed, but communion with Christ compared with what was outside. It is an external view. The apostle is comparing it with what the Jew or the Gentile had. It is not the internal view of eating worthily or not; but, contradistinguishing the Jew and the Gentile in their worship, he proceeds to show what the nature of the church's communion is. “We being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread.”

“The table of demons” has been foolishly applied to that which is not celebrated in accordance with the Lord's own institution. This is certainly not the meaning of the apostle's words, but to my mind a grave error on the part of those who have so applied it. The apostle is contrasting what the Christian has with what the Jew had on the one hand, and what the Gentile had on the other. What the Gentiles sacrificed was to demons. The idol might be nothing; but their danger was from forgetting the demon that was behind it; and it is a dangerous as well as a wicked thing to have to do with demons. But if you go to these idol-feasts, you are tampering, you, have fellowship, with demons.

Israel, again, had their peace-offerings. They were their symbol of communion with Jehovah's altar; while the church of God, as he shows, is as distinct from the Jew as from the Gentile.

Thus the apostle is contrasting both with the Lord's table which Christians have.

But in chapter 11 he is dealing with the state of soul of those who regularly partake of the Lord's Supper. It is a question of Christians rightly or wrongly partaking. If you know the joy of remembering the Lord's death, do not you satisfy yourself with the fact that you are a Christian. You are made worthy by the blood of the Lamb to partake of that Supper; but put yourself to the proof whether you are partaking of it in a worthy manner.

How can a Christian partake of it in an unworthy manner? If the day comes and you merely go to it as a religious habit, it seems very like an unworthy partaking of it. Familiarity breeds contempt where the soul is unexercised; where self-judgment is kept up, the spirit of worship is strengthened and enlarged. Do you go to the Lord's Supper in the morning and to your supper in the evening in much the same spirit? Surely

this is not a worthy manner. Not that you should go to any meeting or even meal lightly, but seriously. Still the Lord's Supper makes a distinctive appeal to the conscience, as it has a special place for the heart. This is not a theory, but the doctrine of God in 1 Corinthians 11.

As for the notion that you may have the Lord's Supper without the Lord's table, it is beneath sober Christians. We may distinguish, where we must not separate. All such speculations are but the fruit of idleness with a certain small activity of mind, but none the less injurious to faith and practice.

To you who have no doubts I speak now. Your danger is in coming to the Lord's Supper without adequately weighing your ways and state of heart. “Let a man examine himself,” not to see whether he is a Christian, as some say. But, if assured of salvation as we should be, the Lord intends that there should be a solemn searching of heart, and challenging of the soul every time, with a view to our seeing in what spirit and state we are coming to the Lord's Supper. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily is guilty with respect to the body and blood of the Lord; for he falls into no small offense as to Christ who treats His Supper irreverently. Consequently the Lord does not fail to come in and vindicate the honor of His name thus set at naught, and to judge, as we see He did at Corinth.

He does not suppose that, when a man has thus tried himself, he will stay away. “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.” It is well to search, judge, and blame yourself. For it is always assumed that a Christian is one who is here to obey the Lord and please God. To partake unworthily then means not that the communicant is not a Christian, but that the Christian partakes without due self-examination and self-judgment.

But, again, “damnation” here is quite wrong. The word should be rendered “judgment.” The only possible meaning of the word here is very simply judgment in this world. The context is decisive and plain in giving this sense, even for those who have no knowledge of the language in which the Holy Ghost wrote. The saints have to judge themselves in order that they may not be condemned (or damned) with the world. Thus the solemn guard of the Lord comes in to maintain gravity and holiness among those who partake, on the peril of His judgment now.

When a soul begins to be careless, the first thing the Lord does is to make him feel miserable and distressed as to his ways, applying the word to his condolence. If he bows to the word, it is well—he is humbled and walks more softly in future. If he is hardened by not heeding the word, then comes in the work of those over him in the Lord to admonish, entreat, or rebuke, seeking to restore. A little evil unjudged always leads to a great deal more. If those that meet as the church are in a bad state and fail, the Lord never fails to come in and judge them here by sickness or even by death. Such is the meaning of “sin unto death.” It is death in this world. So Ananias and Sapphire sinned unto death. The time and circumstances made their sin the more heinous, and brought down on them the Lord's unsparing judgment in a peculiarly solemn form; but the principle is the same.

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The Lord's Supper, Lord's Supper, The: Part 1

1 Corinthians 11:20

The subject on which I have to speak to you tonight is one that concerns not you only, but the Lord: and this emphatically so. I shall have to treat, on another occasion D.V., of another theme, which no less concerns the Lord, and the Lord primarily, not merely Christians. Indeed it is remarkable that these are the only two applications of a special word that the Spirit of God has employed in the New Testament. It is not every scholar has taken note of, or given just importance to, the fact, that the breaking of bread and the first day of the week are each called , and these only. The Lord's “table” even has not the same form of expression; and I have no doubt there is divine wisdom in thus making a difference, however slight A may seem. The Lord's Supper has for its central truth His death, the Lord's day His resurrection. In both cases, the grand point is that each is sacred to the Lord, belonging to Him in a special way—not merely in a general one, but so strictly that the Spirit of God employs for them a term He uses nowhere else. One might show a reason for this change of word. It is not unimportant for as to observe it; for it is our wisdom to learn of Him through His word. I dare say many may think this trivial enough; but there is a power in the actual words used by the Spirit of God that will be found to abide when all mere feelings on the one hand, and reasonings on the other, melt away, so that nothing but what is divine may govern the believer's heart and mind.

The Lord's Supper differs from the other standing institution of Christianity in this, that while baptism is essentially individual, the breaking of bread is distinctively congregational. Individuality of enjoyment is not at all the thought in the Supper, but rather communion. There is in Christianity the utmost moment and scope given to that which is individual; and we need this, for it is the first thing for both God and man, and should take precedence of all else. That soul is never right which loses itself in a crowd. The first thing needed is, that the soul should be set right with the Lord by His grace.

Baptism being an individual thing, in it each soul is said to put on Christ as the sign of His death; for “as many as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized onto His death. Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto death.” Burial unto His death—that is the thought; but it is individual, even if ever so many were baptized at the same time. There is no such thing as fellowship with one another in baptism. Baptism by proxy is a simple absurdity, if not worse. Christian baptism is the confession of Christ's death. There the soul is brought under solemn responsibility, though immense privilege too, because he that is so baptized is bound to walk as one alive from the dead; but this has nothing to do with others—it is one's own responsibility, and is entirely independent of association with them.

In the Lord's Supper it is another thing altogether. It was not a mere circumstance that the disciples were assembled when the Lord instituted it; their gathering to partake of it together is not merely a fact but a principle. It is therefore continually pressed as a doctrine. There is no such thing in Scripture, or in the sense of the institution, as an individual taking bread and wine in remembrance of Christ; the doing so would rather be an error to be forgiven. The whole force and blessedness of the Lord's Supper consists in this, not only that it is essentially an act in common, but that it is based on the truth of the one body of Christ. Being the expression of our common worship of Christ, anything that does not leave full room for every member of His body, walking as such, destroys (as far as it goes) the aim and character of the Lord's Supper. Not, of course, that even in each city all could eat together in one spot; but, let them eat in ever so many, it was to be on the same ground,

and in real intercommunion. The very principle of it embraces the saints walking as such in the whole world: whatever does not is not the Lord's Supper.

There is another remark I have to make. Not only was Christian baptism liable to be perverted (and every Christian will allow that this has been the case far and wide in Christendom), but the Lord's Supper was even more liable to misuse. Whether Christian baptism was or was not perverted in apostolic times, I do not now take up: but it is certain that the Lord's Supper was almost immediately. It was the more exposed to have its character forgotten and misrepresented, because it is a matter of spiritual fellowship. The First Epistle to the Corinthians testifies to this. Even in apostolic times the Spirit of God has recorded it plainly, full of shame and sorrow though it be. How great the humiliation, and how deep the grief, for the apostle to expose it! for what was their fault but the common shame and sorrow of all "Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." It is not merely that they ought to suffer, but it is supposed they do. But though to write the eleventh chapter of 1St Corinthians was to spread and even perpetuate the bad tidings, the Spirit of God felt it necessary for their good and the welfare of all the assembly. This sad failure must be fairly laid before them, and now left on the pages of divine inspiration for our admonition and the instruction of all afterward who value the mind and will of God.

The way in which the misuse of the Lord's Supper came in at Corinth is highly instructive. The Corinthians valued the social character of Christianity more than moderns, and it is a very valuable trait. In those early days Christians loved to see their brethren together, and then partook together of a love-feast. No doubt plausible reasons were not wanting for uniting this with the Lord's Supper. As all were assembled then, it would be a saving of time; why not on the same occasion take the two together? Was it not so at the last passover?

I dare say many Christians now are willing to take the—Lord's Supper together who would shrink from taking a meal in common. But the Corinthians had not yet lost sight of the bonds which unite the holy brotherhood. They had a much higher sense of it than many who love to speak of their faults. Nevertheless their low spiritual state exposed them to evil and error; and this very effect not being corrected in the Spirit brought out their fleshly state. There was levity among them, a low moral condition. At these love-feasts they each brought their fare as at the convivial feast (or s) of the Greeks. This was, in point of fact, a contribution-meal. What a descent from Christianity to heathen practice, when each would bring his own; and thus the rich came with plenty, and the poor had little or nothing to bring! Thus the effect of their coming together to have these feasts was that selfishness, not love, characterized them. Those who had plenty soon proved how easy it is to have too much; those who were poor were made to feel it on these occasions. Thus the whole scene became a reflection, not of God and His grace, but of the world, to the confusion of all who loved the Lord and His church; and the holiest feast on earth—the Lord's Supper for the church of God—was dragged down into the disgrace that covered all. In fact, their state at this very time was such as to bring down His hand in judgment on His people. This and more is what we have before us here.

Many wonder how this could be in "the church of God," and some go so far as to make comparisons and to draw conclusions favorable to themselves and their own times. The Spirit of God would never lead to such a thought. Whenever you read the word of God so as to think highly of yourselves and disparagingly of those who lived before, it is a plain proof that you do not read it aright, or understand the object of the Holy Spirit in what He records. "The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword;" and those only read it to profit who judge themselves by it rather than their brethren, and still less those of primitive times. Let me inquire of each, With whom are you comparing yourselves? Do you compare your ways with those of the Corinthians when beguiled of the enemy? How much wiser to judge yourselves, not by what the Corinthians slipped into, but by what the apostle wrote, by what the Lord instituted! And let none think this too hard; for it is fair to ask, who is entitled to alter the institutions of Christ? Has the church such a license? Is she not, on the contrary, called to submit herself to the Lord as a virgin espoused to Him? Who would think highly of the character of one who set herself up against her husband? But this is but a small part of what Christendom has done—taking advantage of His name to speak proudly and act independently, not to say wickedly, and most especially that Church which claims for herself to have altered nothing, whereas scarce a shred remains to her of Christ in truth, love, and holiness.

But let us look at Scripture, not to condemn Rome, but to judge ourselves. Let us search and see whether and how far we are doing the will of the Lord. How are we to know we are pleasing Christ? The word of the Lord is our only sure guide.

We have the description of the institution of the Lord's Supper given to us in three of the Gospels, in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Eternal life and the gift of the Holy Ghost are the great themes of John. Neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper enters into either his Gospel or his Epistles; but in the historic Gospels we have a full account.

The apostle Paul, too, had a fresh revelation about the Lord's Supper, not about baptism. He expressly tells us that the Lord did not send him to baptize but to preach the gospel: I doubt if the other apostles could have said so. They were given by Himself a commission to baptize. "Go ye therefore, and disciple all nations, baptizing them unto the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." But the apostle Paul was not charged in the same way, being called from heaven. From his very conversion he learns the union of the assembly with Christ. Of this the Lord's Supper, not baptism, was the suited sign, and that was revealed to him, though of course he was baptized and did baptize like another.

Baptism is the confession of Christ, emphatically of Christ's death and resurrection. The Lord's Supper is the expression of union with Christ founded on His death who is now on high. That those who partake of the one loaf are the one body of Christ, is the great idea of the Lord's Supper, as well as the announcement of His death. Hence the apostle Paul, who beyond all made known the mystery of Christ and the church, has a special revelation concerning this given to Him from heaven. So he says, "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread." Now, nothing strikes one more than the extreme simplicity of the materials the Lord was pleased to use for His supper. He took bread. There is nothing more common than bread. He blessed, and brake, and gave to them, while they all remained in the same position. He blessed; but there is no thought of consecration here, still less of consubstantiation, or of transubstantiation. He gave thanks; but He did exactly the same when distributing the five barley loaves and two fishes, when nobody, I suppose, would say that they were consecrated or changed. It is a mere delusion to conceive that there was any change in the elements. Scripture intimates nothing of the sort, but rather indeed, and very expressly, the contrary. The disciples ate bread and drank wine; and the whole point of the blessing is the power of faith coming in and investing what it had before it, though the very simplest materials, with the deepest associations of God's grace in the death of His beloved Son.

Every scheme which would exalt the elements or aggrandize those who “administer” to the communicants is taking away from Christ. All accessories of sight or sound accompanying it are purely human additions, and contrary to His word. Scripture repudiates them as not of the Spirit, and of the first man, not of the Second. The Lord's Supper belongs to Him, and to Him so specially, that to bring in anything else is to slight Him, being an infringement of His heavenly glory, as well as of the cross, whereby the world is crucified to the Lord, and the saint to the world. For he that hath His word and keepeth it, he it is who loveth Him. It is in vain to think we care for His glory if we slight scripture which reveals it.

He says to all His own, “Take, eat.” Not take thou, because the “thou” would bring in individuality; and this is never the thought of the Lord's Supper, but the body. The whole point of the Supper is communion in the remembrance of Christ, but of Christ in death. Christ is everything, and the common blessing of all is in and with Christ.

The love-feast was what we may call the Christians' Supper; this was its primary aim. It was their feast; but the Lord's Supper is far more than their supper. In it, therefore, so far from a person eating or drinking for himself alone, it is intended to embrace the whole body of Christ, save those who may be through discipline put outside. Whatever narrows this holy circle, either in principle or in practice, infringes on the Lord's intention in His Supper. Hence the moment you bring in any peculiar doctrine, only admitting to the Supper those who expressly or virtually subscribe to it, you make it your supper and not the Lord's. If guided of Him, we meet there as members of His body, and everything else is set aside as secondary but Himself.

Nothing can be more valuable in its place, and for God's ends by it, than Christian ministry. It embraces rule as well as teaching, pastorship as well as preaching. There are those that can teach, who have not the power of thus ruling; as, again, others who might rule well, having great moral weight, who could not teach. Some again have the gift of preaching to the unconverted who need teaching themselves, and are not at all fit to lead on, clear, and establish, the church of God. Nor does a gift for ministry in itself suppose moral weight for rule; and so we see in the facts of every day.

Christian ministry was founded by the Lord who died for us, but the spring of it was when He went up to heaven. He gave gifts to men, but He gave them after He went on high (Eph. 4:8-11).

This is very important; for if Christian ministry had commenced while Christ was on earth, it might be said that things have wholly changed since. But there has been no change for Christ, but only alas! amongst Christians since He went up to heaven.

Our Lord Jesus when here below sent out twelve apostles in relation to the twelve tribes of Israel; as He sent out the seventy afterward with a final message; but still in testimony to Israel. Was this Christian testimony? Not so. It was after His ascension that He gave gifts to men—apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Not that these are all, but those named in Eph. 4 are enough for my purpose now.

(To be continued)

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 11:27-34, Notes on

Such is the institution and the aim of the Lord's supper. Let us pursue the consequences pressed by the apostle.

“Wherefore whoever eateth1 the bread or drinketh the cup of the Lord unworthily,2 shall be guilty as to the body and the3 blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh4 eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body.5 For this cause many [are] weak and sickly among you, and many are falling asleep. But 6 if we were discerning ourselves, we should not be judged; but when judged we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when coming together to eat, wait for each other. If7 any one is hungry, let him eat at home, that ye may not come together for judgment. But the rest will I arrange when I come.” (Vers. 27-34.)

But the more precious the Lord's supper is, as the gathering of Christian affection to a focus in the remembrance of His death, the greater the danger, if the heart be careless, or the conscience not before God. It is not a question of allowing unworthy persons to communicate. Low as the Corinthians might be through their unjudged carnal thoughts and worldly desires, they had not fallen so grievously as that; they had not yet learned to make excuses for admitting the unrenewed and open enemies of the Lord to His table. But they were in danger of reducing its observance to a form for themselves, of partaking in the supper without exercise of soul, either as to their own ways, or as to His unspeakable love who was thus reminding them of His death for them. Hence the solemn admonition of the apostle, “Wherefore whosoever eateth the bread (for the added emphasis of the common text is uncalled for), or drinketh the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.” To eat or drink it as an ordinary meal, or a common thing, without reflection or self-judgment, is to eat and drink “unworthily;” and the more so because it is a Christian who does so; for of all men he should feel most what he owes the Lord, and what the Lord expressly brings to his remembrance at that serious moment. It is to be guilty of an offense, not merely against Himself in general, but in respect of His body and His blood, if he treat their memorials with indifference. There meet together the extremity of our need and guilt, the fullness of suffering in Christ, the deepest possible judgment of sin, yet withal grace to the uttermost, leaving not a sin unforgiven: what facts, feelings, motives, results, surround the cross of the Lord Jesus! It therefore appeals, as nothing else can, to the believer's heart, as well as to his conscience, and therefore does the apostle censure and stigmatize the Corinthians' fault so strongly.

“But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body.” Grace is thus maintained, but through righteousness, as ever. Each is to put himself to the proof, and so to eat and drink. The Lord would have His own to come, but not with negligence of spirit or levity; this were to be a party both to His own dishonor, and the deeper evil of his followers. Still He invites all, if He urges the trying of our ways. Self-judgment is with a view to coming, not to staying away. For it is a question of those whom grace counts worthy; whatever their past or personal unworthiness, they are washed, they are sanctified, they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Having the Spirit, not of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind, they are assumed to be in peace with God, and delivered from the law of sin; they are contemplated as jealous for the Lord's glory, and hating what grieves the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption.

It is not supposed that they could persevere in evil that they discover themselves exposed to, or that they confess sin in which they begin again to indulge, as if God were mocked by an acknowledgment which would thus aggravate their wickedness. Grace strengthens the man who tries himself with integrity, and it emboldens him to come. Where there is lightness on the other hand, the Lord shows Himself there to judge. “For he that eateth and drinketh (most add “unworthily,” but the most ancient omit) eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body,” that is, the Lord's body, as the mass add, in both cases needlessly, though right enough for the sense which is implied. To bring in the church would falsify the thought: the wrong was forgetfulness of the Lord's self-sacrificing love. He instituted the supper to remind us of it continually.

But there is another error still more prevalent, and even long and widely consecrated, which has wrought as much mischief as almost any other single mistranslation of a scripture. It is not “damnation” of which verse 29 speaks, but in contrast with it, judgment, . Yet all the celebrated English versions, from Wiclif downward, have sanctioned the grievous mistake, save the worst of them, the Rhemish, through their servile adherence to the Vulgate, which here happens to give judicium rightly. The curious fact however is, that of all systems none is really so tainted with the unbelief which led to the mistranslation as the Romanist. For it naturally regards with the utmost superstition the Lord's supper, and with it interweaves its idolatry of the real presence. Hence its interpretation of guilt as to the body and the blood of the Lord. Hence its notion of “damnation” attaching to a misuse of the sacrament, followed by almost all the Protestant associations. But the Protestant is misled by his version, while the Romanist is the less excusable, inasmuch as his Vulgate and vernacular versions are so far right, yet he is even more deeply under the delusion which denies Christian relationship and an atom of grace in God.

Here the Spirit really teaches us that, where the true and holy aim of the Lord's supper is slighted, and the communicant does not discern the body (that is, does not discriminate between the memorial of Christ and an ordinary meal), he eats and drinks judgment as a present thing. He brings on himself the chastening hand of the Lord in vindication of His honor and His love. Hence it is added, “For this cause [are] many weak and sick among you, and a considerable number are falling asleep.” There sin sickness was to death. And there is still further intimation: “For if we discerned ourselves we should not be judged; but when judged we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” This is conclusive. The express aim of the Lord in inflicting these bodily sufferings at the present is in order that His faulty saints may escape damnation. Condemnation awaits the world because, rejecting the Lord, it must bear, its own doom. He has borne the sins of the faithful; but if they are light about His grace, they come under His present rebukes, that they may be spared condemnation with the world whom they so far resemble. If they discerned the evil in its working within, they would avoid, not only its manifestation without, but His chastening; if they fail in this self-judgment, He does not fail in watchful care, and deals with them; but even such judgment flows from His love, and takes the shape of chastening, that they may not perish in the condemnation which falls on the guilty world. How grievous on the part of the saints; how gracious and holy on His part! But it is evidently and only present judgment that they may not fall into future condemnation; that is, it is in contrast with “damnation."

The apostle closes his grave censure and instruction with the exhortation to wait for each other when coming together to eat; self would thus he judged, and love in active exercise. “If any one is hungry, let him eat at home, that ye may not come together for judgment.” The indulgence of flesh in one provokes flesh in another, and the Lord must then judge more than him who first dishonored Him. The apostle did not say all he might. “The rest will I arrange when I come.” It would not be for the best interests of the assembly if all were laid down formally. The Spirit in living power is the true supplement to the written word as the unerring standard, not tradition. We need and have the Holy Ghost as well as scripture; but scripture is the rule, not the Spirit, though we cannot use it aright without Him.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 11:17-26, Notes on

The apostle had settled the point of comely order as respects women. He now turns to a still graver matter, the Lord's mind about His supper. From this the Corinthians had sadly departed there and then, slipping into the grossest evils, as we shall see.

Yet is it important to take note before we go into detail that, according to the modern mode of administering the sacrament, such a disorder was impossible. The reason is beyond measure a grave one. Christendom has radically altered the supper—a more serious state of things than even the distressing and immoral levity which then disgraced the Corinthian assembly. The latter could be judged and rectified; the former demands a return to first principles which have been wholly given up, not merely as to the institution itself but as to the nature of both ministry and church, and their mutual relations.

What gave occasion to the grievous impropriety of the assembly in its then low and careless estate was apparently the mixing up the love feast with the Lord's supper. The love feast (or Agape) was a meal of which the early Christians partook in common, the aim being to cultivate social intercourse among those who are strangers and pilgrims called to suffer on earth and to spend eternity together in glory with the Lord. The Corinthians however had lost the sense of Christian strangership, and as they had lot in the rivalry of the schools from the world in zeal for favorite teachers, so they degraded even the Agape by holding to class distinctions, the rich feasting on their own contributions to the meal, while those who had nothing to give were made keenly to feel their poverty. Thus the principle of Christian society was destroyed at the very meal which ought to have displayed it in practice; and as they thus selfishly forgot wherefore they thus came together, God gave them up to the deeper sin of degrading the Lord's supper, which was partaken of at the same time, by the effects of their license in eating and drinking.

This doubtless was a scandalous irreverence; but the sacrament as now observed is the deliberate and systematic abandonment even of the form of the supper, the change of it into a superstitious ordinance from the thanksgiving of God's family in view of the deepest solemnity in time, nay for eternity, the death of our Lord on which it is based with the remembrance of Himself in infinite love, humiliation, and suffering for our sins. Nothing but the appreciation of its spiritual aim preserved it from becoming a scene of shame; if not kept in the Spirit, it quickly passed into fleshly lightness; and this is the will of God in order that it may necessitate the looking to the Lord who promises His presence to those gathered to His name. It is with the supper as with all other parts of Christian worship and service. They are nothing if not sustained by the Spirit according to the word of God. Change their principle in order to secure appearances, and all is ruined. This is precisely what tradition has done in the Lord's supper as elsewhere. From the sacramental eucharist of post-apostolic times the Corinthian excesses were excluded, but so was the Holy Spirit from guiding the saints according to the word. Clericalism was introduced to preside, formalism and

distance imposed on the rest, and the rite made more or less a saving ordinance, instead of the communion of Christ's body and blood enjoyed by His members in His presence.

But let us weigh the apostle's words. “Now in enjoining this I praise1 [you] not, because ye come together not for the better but for the worse. For first, when ye come together in an assembly, I hear that divisions exist among you, and in some measure I believe [it]; for there must be even sects among you that the approved may become manifest among you.” (Vers. 18,19.) We have here important help toward deciding the difference between these terms as well as the precise nature of each. Schism is a division within the assembly, while they nil still abide in the same association as before, even if severed in thought or feeling through fleshly partiality or aversion. Heresy, in its ordinary scriptural application as here (not its ecclesiastical usage), means a party among the saints, separating from the rest in consequence of a still stronger following of their own will. A schism within if unjudged tends to a sect or party without, when on the one hand the approved become manifest, who reject these narrow and selfish ways, and on the other the party man is self-condemned, as preferring his own particular views to the fellowship of all saints in the truth. (Compare Titus 3:10, 11.)

They met in one place. “When ye come together therefore into the same [place], it is not to eat [the] Lord's supper. For each in eating taketh his own supper before [others], and one is hungry, and another drinketh excessively. Have ye not then houses for eating and drinking? or despise ye the church of God, and put shame on those that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you? In this I do not praise.” (Vers. 20-22.) They had not as yet broken up into sects: this evil was reserved for a later and worse day. If however they did come together into one place, the apostle will not allow that it was to eat the Lord's supper, but each their own: so utterly were they losing the truth of things while the form lingered on. Not only was Christ gone, but even the social element. They were a spectacle of greed; and, what made it more flagrant, those who had means were the worse, despising the church of God, and putting to shame the poor. With all his desire to praise the Corinthians, in this the apostle could not.2

This leads to the revelation on the subject vouchsafed by the Lord. “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which he was being delivered up, took bread, and, having given thanks, brake [it] and said3, This is my body which [is] 4 for you: this do in remembrance of me; in like manner also the cup after having supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink [it], in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink the cup, ye announce the death of the Lord till he come.” (Vers. 23-26.)

It is interesting to notice that to Paul was given a revelation of the supper, not of baptism. He was baptized like another himself, not by an apostle even, lest this might be perverted to make him dependent on the twelve, but by a simple disciple, Ananias. Baptism attaches to the individual confessor and would have its place as the sign of the great Christian basis, the death and resurrection of Christ, if there had been no such thing as the baptizing believers by the Spirit into one body, the church. But the supper, besides being the memorial of Christ and emphatically of His death, is now bound up with the body of Christ, as we have seen in chapter 10:16, 17. This is so true that he who willfully or under an act of discipline does not partake of that one loaf ceases to enjoy the privileges of God's assembly on earth; he who partakes of it cannot free himself from the responsibilities of that holy fellowship. And as Paul was the chosen vessel by whom was to be revealed the mystery of Christ and the church, so did it seem good to the Lord that he should receive a special revelation of His supper, the standing sign of its unity, and public witness of its communion.

It is striking to observe that, plainly as the Lord has revealed His mind here, even the Protestant Reformers failed to recover its lineaments. They have individualized the Lord's supper. They make it “for thee.” “Take thou,” &c. This is consistent. They had not seen the one body and one Spirit. Even if they had limited it to those who were believed to be justified by faith, still this would have been only an aggregate of individuals. They never received the truth of the church as Christ's body on earth. On the contrary they began the system of distinct or independent national churches on earth; they delegated the unity of the church to heaven. The one body, as an existing relationship to which the Christian belongs now, and on which he is bound to act continually, was unknown as a present reality; and this ignorance betrayed itself even in their mode of celebrating the Sacrament, as it does to this day.

Even where there is no such form of individuality, there is as little sense or expression of the one body.5 The reason is obvious. They do not contemplate all the faithful, being avowedly associations of certain souls, on the ground of points of difference (that is, sects), or embracing the world as well as believers. In either way dissenting or nationalist, being off the basis of God's church, they naturally drop the words, as they are revealed for God's order of things, and change them, perhaps unconsciously, into what suits their own condition. Communion there cannot be but in the Spirit, who exalts Christ, not opinions, and goes out toward all saints, not some only, nor the world at all in such worship.

It is the holy, gracious, and deep meaning of the Lord's supper, and in no way the elements or the ministrant, which invests it with such value and blessing. He is in the midst of His own to give them the enjoyment of His love in present power, but as recalling their hearts to the sacrifice of Himself for their sins to place them without charge or question before God. The bread remains bread, and so does the wine; the thanksgiving, or blessing, we find as at all times of ordinary life in receiving the creatures of God; of miracle at this time the word of God whispers not a word. The Lord breaks the bread and says, This is My body which is on your behalf: this do in remembrance of Me; in like manner the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood: this do as often as ye drink it in remembrance of Me.

The Lord's supper then is to remind us of Christ, of His death; not of our sins but of our sins remitted and ourselves loved. It is in no wise the old covenant of condemnation, but the new covenant, God known in grace, iniquity forgiven, and sins remembered no more; not yet made with the houses of Israel set forever in the land under the reign of Messiah, but the blood is shed which is its foundation, and we who believe, Jew or Gentile, have it in spirit, not in letter. (See 2 Cor. 3) Of this the cup especially is the pledge.

But Romanism takes away the cup from its votaries, and consistently enough; for as a system it supposes sacrifice going on, not finished, and consequently it administers a sacrament of non-redemption. The bread, say they, contains the blood, flesh, soul, divinity, all in the body; that is, the blood is not shed, and therefore no remission of sins, no perfecting of the sanctified, for the one offering is always going on and not yet accomplished or accepted. Romanism therefore stands in contrast with Christianity in the capital truth of the efficacy of Christ's death, indispensable both to God's glory and to the cleansing of the conscience of the Christian.

But Protestantism has infringed on Christ's institution, not only by impairing the grace of God in the Lord's supper, but by letting in the world as we have seen and by insisting for the most part on an authorized official to administer it. All these ruin its simple, profound, and most affecting significance. Not that one denies for a moment ministry or rule; they are of exceeding moment and will be treated of in their place

according to scripture. Yet in the Lord's supper, not only as He instituted it at first but as it was revealed by Him to the apostle in its final shape, none of these things appear. It is essentially as members of the one body that we communicate. Even the gifts are introduced separately and afterward. Elders, if any, are ignored; and this is the more remarkable, as the occasion might have seemed exactly one to have reminded them of the disorder allowed at Corinth, if it had really been their duty to preside at the supper. But, instead of reprehending any one's neglect as specially responsible, the apostle deals with the hearts and consciences of all the saints and brings out its true meaning, object, and guard for the instruction of the entire church of God. To discern the body, to appreciate the unfathomable grace of our Lord in His death for our sins, is the true corrective for all who have faith in Him who deigns to be in their midst as thus gathered to His name. To introduce a human order however reverent in appearance, without divine warrant, for the purpose of shutting out the Corinthian excesses or any others, is more offensive to him that trembles at the word of the Lord than any abuse of His supper as it was instituted. Even under such circumstances as those of Corinth the apostle adds nothing, takes away nothing, corrects nothing of that institution; in which we are called to announce the death of the Lord until He shall have come.

These last words convict of a great, perilous, and irreverent error those who count the Lord's supper a relic of Judaism and argue for its disuse among Christians like the community of goods practiced only for a brief space after Pentecost. A fresh revelation to the apostle of the Gentiles ought to have put such a notion to the rout, even apart from words such as those of verse 26 which suppose the constant and frequent observance of the supper till Christ returns in glory. And in fact the history of such theorists as the Society of Friends is the strongest proof of their error; for no Christian sect has more thoroughly lost the force of the truth of redemption, in discarding its signs. As is well known, they refuse as a whole (I speak not of evangelical individuals) both baptism and the Lord's supper. In accordance with this they do not see death sealed on the race, nor the efficacy of Christ's death in grace for the believer. They think of Christ as putting all mankind into a state of indefinite improvableness and so of saving those who do their best, Jew, Turk, or heathen; they repudiate therefore both institutions which set forth objectively that one can have no part with Christ risen but through His death. Subject to the word, we were buried with Him by baptism to death; and now continually announce His death till He come. Self is thus judged, yet are we kept in the constant sense of His grace. Is it not the truth as to ourselves, and due to Him? Is it not in perfect harmony with the gospel, which combines peace and salvation in Him with the confession of good-for-nothingness in those who are thus blessed to the praise of God's mercy in Christ?

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Notes on

It is not without instruction for us that the apostle can praise in the midst of so much too justly merited reproof. He loved to approve all he could.

“Now I praise you1 that in all things ye remember me, and hold fast the traditions according as I delivered [them] to you.” (Ver. 2) Tradition in scripture is used, not only for the added maxims of men, as in Matt. 15, but for what the apostles enjoined on the saints, first orally, then in inspired writings, as also in both ways, while the canon was in course and not yet complete. Compare also Rom. 6:17 Thess. 2:15.

“But I wish you to know that the head of every man is the2 Christ, and woman's head the man, and the3 Christ's head God. Every man praying or prophesying with head covered [literally, having something] on [his] head shameth his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with the head uncovered shameth her own4 head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn; but if [it is] shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For man indeed ought not to have his head covered, being God's image and glory; but the woman is man's glory. For man is not of woman, but woman of man. For also man was not created on account of woman, but woman on account of man. On this account ought the woman to have authority on the head on account of the angels. However; neither [is] woman without man, nor man without woman, in [the] Lord; for as the woman [is] of the man, so also [is] the man by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman should pray to God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you that, if man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him; but if woman have long hair, it is a glory to her? Because the hair hath been given her instead of a veil. But if any one seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor yet the assemblies of God.” (Vers. 316.)

This is a most characteristic specimen of the apostle's dealing with a point of order. He deduces the solution from first principles involved in divine dealings from the beginning. It is an admirable way of settling questions, not by mere abstract authority, even where the highest lay, but by conveying to others the ways of God in creation and providence, which drew out the admiration as well as submission of his heart. It is no question of new creation. There difference disappears. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. But here on earth there is a relative order established of God; and as the man is woman's head, so the Christ is the head of every man, and God is the Christ's head. It were still more perilously false to use these words to disparage Christ than to turn aside their force to deny the subjection of woman to man. The Christ is viewed as such, not in His own intrinsic personal glory, or in the, communion of the divine nature, but in the place He entered and took as the Anointed. God, therefore, is the head of the highest; and as woman is bound to own the place given her by God, so is man to fill suitably his own assigned relationship. The principle is applied to correct some Christian women at Corinth who out stepped the limits of propriety. The apostle puts the entire case, and even a man's mistake as to it, though it would appear that it was as yet a question of the other sex. For a man to have his head covered would falsify his witness to Christ; so for a woman not to be. It is not argued on grounds of habit, modesty, or the like, but of the facts as revealed by God. It would be the sign of authority taken by the woman, of authority abandoned by the man. A woman without a veil is like a man, without being really so. It is to renounce, as far as the act goes, the subjection she owes to man; it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. Let her also be shorn, says the indignant servant of the Lord; but if either be shameful for a woman, he adds, let her be covered. (Vers. 26.)

There is a still farther opening of the ground as to man and woman in the verses which follow. “For man indeed ought not to have his head covered, being God's image and glory; but the woman is man's glory. For man is not of woman, but woman of man. For also man was not created on account of woman, but woman on account of man. On this account ought the woman to have authority on the head on account of the angels. However, neither [is] woman without man, nor man without woman, in [the] Lord; for as the woman [is] of the man, so also [is] the man by the woman; but all things of God.” (Vers. 7-12.)

Thus the apostle points out man's standing directly as God's image and glory: woman is man's glory, having no such place of public representation for God. Whatever she has relatively is essentially mediate and derivative. Creation is the proof, not of course the ordinary course of things since. It is impossible, therefore, to form a right estimate without looking to the beginning. If verse 7 then refers to the origination of man and woman respectively, verse 8 sets forth the making of the woman for, and subsequently to, the man, as grounds of woman's subordination to man. It is easy to see that, where creation is denied, or even ignored, men naturally reason and labor for their equality. But there is another consideration, which only faith could admit—the testimony to divine order which should be given by man and woman to those spiritual beings whom scripture declares to have the most intimate connection with the heirs of salvation. (Compare 1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 3) “For this reason ought the woman to have power on the head on account of the angels” a sentiment entirely mistaken by the mass of commentators, who have gone off, some into degrading thoughts about bad angels, others into lowering the word to the sense of the righteous themselves, the Christian prophets, the presidents of the assemblies, the nuntii desponsationum or persons deputed to effect betrothals, or mere spies sent there by the unfaithful.

So also the expression, “authority on the head,” has given rise to endless discussion. To have authority on the head unquestionably means to wear the sign of it in a covering or veil. On the other hand, in verses 11, 12, the apostle is careful to insist on the mutuality of man and woman, denying their independence of one another, affirming God the source of them respectively, and of all things.

Further, he appeals to the sense of propriety grounded on the constitution of both man and woman. “In your own selves judge: is it becoming that a woman uncovered should pray to God? Doth not even nature itself teach you,” &c. If it be as natural for man to have short hair as for woman to have long, is it not a revolt against the nature of each to reverse this in practice? God's creation must govern where the word of His grace does not call to higher things, and this could not be pretended here.

Finally, the habitual usage of the churches, as regulated by apostolic wisdom, is no light thing to disturb, and this the apostle puts with great moral force. “But if any one seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor yet the churches of God.” It is a contemptible sort of independence which sets itself up, not only against the spiritual feeling of all the public witness in God's assemblies, but above those endowed with heavenly wisdom to direct all. It is neither conscience nor spirituality, but a fleshly love of differing from others, and at bottom sheer vanity. The “custom” negated was the Corinthian innovation, which confounded God's order in nature, not disputatiousness, as many ancients and moderns strangely conclude,

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 10:23 and 11:1, Notes on

Thus had the apostle shown the danger of idolatry, from the inveterate tendency, not of the Gentiles merely in their habitual worship of idols, but of the very people separated to Jehovah as His witnesses against it. He had also proved that to partake of sacrificial feasts in a heathen temple is none the less idolatrous, because, if the idol is nothing, the demons are very serious indeed, as the enemies of God and man. The meat in itself maybe harmless, but to eat it thus is to have communion with the demons behind the idol, and so to renounce the fellowship of Christ. For one cannot have both: Christianity, Judaism, heathenism, are exclusive of each other. The Lord must feel and judge such unfaithfulness on the part of His own; His love and honor could not pass by a virtual renunciation of Himself.

But if a Christian should abstain from idol sacrifice out of love to a weak brother, and yet more for fear of provoking the Lord's jealousy, is it wrong in itself to eat such meat? Certainly not. As he began, so he closes. “All things are lawful, 1but do not profit; all things are lawful, 2 but do not edify. Let no one seek his own [advantage], but his neighbor's [literally, that of the other].” (Vers. 28, 24.) The principle laid down in chapter 6 is enlarged. It is not merely lawful “to me,” nor it is a question here of being brought under the power of any. There indifference as to meats exposed some to impurity, here to idolatry. The apostle urges not merely exemption from evil, but positive edification. This love alone secures; because it looks not at its own things, and seeks the good of others. It would please one's neighbor, with a view to good to edification. Even Christ, in whom was no evil, did not please Himself, but rather took on Himself the reproaches of those that reproached Jehovah. Thus it is not enough to avoid being brought under the power of anything, but one should seek the profit, not of self, but of others, and the building up of all.

Hence we have the principle applied in general, and tested particularly, in verses 25-80. “Everything that is offered for sale in the shambles eat, examining nothing for conscience sake: for the earth [is] the Lord's, and its fullness. And if any of the unbelieving inviteth you, and ye desire to go, all that is set before you eat, examining nothing for conscience sake. But if any say to you, This is sacrificed,3 eat not for his sake that pointed [it] out and conscience,4 but conscience, I say, not one's own, but the other's; for why is my liberty judged by another conscience? 5If I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?” Thus the principle of God's creation holds good for all that is on sale in the market, as well as for what might be on an unbeliever's table, if one should go there, and one may eat in either case without special inquiry. It is otherwise, not merely in an idol temple, but even in private, where one should say, This is offered to holy purposes, because he evidently has a conscience about it, though one otherwise might have perfect liberty. It is good in such a case to deny oneself, and not expose one's liberty to be judged by another, or incur evil speaking for the thing for which I give thanks. One must in love respect the scruple of the weakest saint, while holding fast by the intelligence and liberty of Christ.

The apostle then lays down the still larger and golden rule of Christian conduct: “Whether, then, ye eat or drink, or do anything, do all things unto God's glory. Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews or Greeks, or to the church of God; even as I too please all in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but that of the many, that they be saved. Be imitators of me, even as I too am of Christ.” (Ver. 31; 11:1) Thus, if one does all to God's glory, self is not sought to be gratified, but given up; and in this way is no stumblingblock presented to man, on the one hand, whether Jews or Gentiles, or to God's assembly, on the other. Love alone so walks, seeking God's glory and man's good. Against the fruit of the Spirit there is no law, even among those who vaunt law most, and least love grace. So it was with the apostle habitually; the most uncompromising of all the apostles, none equaled him in gracious concession, where it could be consistently with Christ.

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 10:12-22, Notes on

The scriptural history of Israel is thus exceedingly solemn as well as instructive. It was so recounted by the Spirit as to be typical of us. “So then let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. No temptation hath taken you save a human one: but God [is] faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will make with the temptation also the issue that ye1 may be able to bear [it].” (Vers. 12,18.)

On the one hand the self-confidence of the Corinthians, as of every one else, is precisely the source of danger. In the world as it is, and in man as he is, there must be constant exposure; for evil exists, and an enemy is not wanting to avail himself of it; and the people of God are the especial aim of his malicious activity to dishonor the Lord by their means. If others slumber in unremoved death, those that are alive to God in Christ need to watch and pray. On the other hand they had been tried by no temptation beyond the lot of man: Christ was tried beyond it in the days of His flesh, not only at the end of His service but at the beginning; not only in all things in like manner, apart from sin, but beyond what belongs to man, tempted as He was for forty days in the wilderness. But we can only overcome in our little trials as He in His great ones by dependence on God and obedience of His word which the Spirit clothes with might against Satan. We may and ought to confide in God. If He is faithful who called us to the fellowship of His Son, equally so is He in not permitting us to be tempted beyond measure. It is His power by which the saints are kept through faith, not by their perseverance. Hence with the trial He makes also the issue or escape, and this not by removing the trial but by enabling His own to endure.

Now comes the special warning. “Wherefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to prudent [men]: judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it2 not fellowship with the blood of the Christ? The loaf which we break, is it not fellowship with the body, of the Christ? Because we, the many, are one loaf, one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.” (Vers. 14-17) To count idolatry impossible for a Christian is to trifle. This the Corinthians were doing. They knew, said they, that the idol was a nullity, and therefore it was nothing to them to eat meat which had been offered to heathen idols; nay, they could go a step farther and sit and eat in the heathen temples. The apostle on the contrary maintains the principle of partaking in an evil which you may not yourself do, and especially in things sacred. The true wisdom in such cases is to keep wholly aloof. It is a misuse of knowledge to participate, or even give the appearance of participating, in what is religiously false. It is in vain to plead that the heart is not in what one allows outwardly, not only on moral grounds but because it slights Christ and ignores Satan's wiles. Is not the Christian redeemed from bondage to the enemy? Is he not bought with a price to glorify God? At once the apostle makes themselves judges by putting them in presence of the central and standing institution of church fellowship. Where was their practical understanding now? “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not fellowship with the blood of the Christ? The loaf which we break, is it not fellowship with the body of the Christ?"

Clearly the apostle reasons from the public symbol of Christian communion; he is not laying it down to correct wrong any observance: else he would not have put the cup before the loaf here. He begins his appeal with that which had the deepest meaning as to Christ; he leaves for the next place what most impressively conveys the fellowship of the saints with Christ as one body. It is so viewed as to compare it best with the peace offerings of Israel and the sacrifices of the heathen. Fellowship there is in each. The worshippers share in common what distinguishes them from all others. In the church's case it is the blood and body of Christ. The blood of Christ awakens the gravest thoughts in the Christian; the body of Christ, the most intimate unity possible, “because we, the many, are one loaf, one body; for we all partake of the one loaf.” There is neither transubstantiation nor con substantiation. It is the loaf that we break, it is the one loaf of which we all partake. Representatively it is the one body of Christ; and if the loaf be that body, just so we, the many, are that one loaf also. This scripture, like the rest which speak of it, is wholly irreconcilable with Romanism or Lutheranism, which here present mere superstitions, not the truth of God. The words on which they essay to base their errors do really refute them.

There is not a thought of sacerdotal consecration of the elements. “The cup of blessing which we bless,” “the loaf which we break,” prove that it is no act of one endued with extraordinary power and transmitted authority. It is “we” and “we, the many,” in the very context which speaks of “I” and “ye.” But all such individuality vanishes from this feast, as being radically opposed to its nature. None that truly entered into its spirit could have so marred the fellowship as to make the minister first receive in both kinds himself, and then proceed to deliver the same to the clergy if present, and after that to the people also in order. Who that is faithful to its scriptural meaning could say, The body.... which was given for thee, the blood.... which was shed for thee? Still less could there have been such a contrast with the Lord's words in letter and spirit, such an oblivion even of the form as a wafer expressly unbroken placed by the priest on the tongue and no cup whatever for the communicant. These are the palpable and fatal signs of a Christendom at war with the Lord, of His word set at naught, and the Holy Spirit quenched. One of course may give thanks at the breaking of the bread; but in truth, if duly done according to Christ, it is all the saints that bless, all that break the loaf. Such is the essence of its meaning; and he who departs from it must account for it to the Lord who commanded all that are His to do thus.

It may be added that in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark we read of the Lord, after taking the loaf, blessing, and then giving thanks after taking the cup. In Luke He is said to give thanks after taking a loaf. The decisive disproof however of what gross ignorance mistakenly infers from it is that, on the occasion of feeding the multitude with bread, the very same language is used; that is, when a sacrament confessedly was out of the question, He took the five loaves and two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, blessed them. (Luke 9) It is not that is exactly equivalent to , but clearly they can be used to a certain extent interchangeably; they express with a shade of difference the selfsame act, neither prayer for a miracle nor the form of effecting one, but very simply a benediction or thanksgiving. If our ordinary food be sanctified by the word of God and prayer, who could think of the supper of the Lord without blessing and thanksgiving?

Again that not faith only is possessed but the Spirit of God is supposed to have sealed the communicants is plain from all that is said. Nobody doubts that a hypocrite or selfdeceived soul might partake; but the Lord's intention is as clear as that the character of the feast excludes such. They may drink the wine or break the bread; but they are as distant as ever from the grace and truth therein celebrated, and only add presumptuous sin to the selfwill and unbelief of their habitual life. Individually the believer has already eaten the flesh of the Son of man and drunk His blood; he eats it, knowing that he has eternal life in Him, and otherwise no life in himself. Together we bless the cup, together we break the bread in thanksgiving before Him who has blessed us beyond all thought; and herein is communion. To suppose that unbelievers share it is profanity, and deliberate profanity if we systematically open the door for them and invite them in.

But the point before the apostle was rather that the Christian cannot go out to another fellowship if he enjoy this. Communion is the joint participation of the blessing for all whom it concerns; but it excludes as rigorously those who have no part or lot in it. Further it forbids from any other fellowship those who share this. Even the Israelite after the flesh who ate the sacrifices was a partaker with the altar of Jehovah, and severed in principle and fact from the vanities of the heathen. “See Israel according to flesh: are not they that eat the sacrifices in

fellowship with the altar?” How much more did it become the Christian to judge and walk according to God! If they lived in the Spirit, let them walk in the Spirit.

“What say I then? that an idol-sacrifice3 is anything, or that an idol4 is anything? but that what they5 sacrifice6: they sacrificed to demons and not to God; and I wish you not to be in fellowship with demons. Ye cannot drink [the] Lord's cup and of a cup of demons; ye cannot partake of [the] Lord's table and of a table of demons. What! do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?” (Vers. 19-22.)

To eat of sacrificial offerings was evidently then no light matter. As the Jew who ate was in communion with the altar, so he who partook of what was offered to an idol had fellowship with the idol. Such is its real meaning. Does this contradict the previous reasoning of the apostle as of the prophets of old, that the idol was a mere nonentity? Not at all. But if such products of man's device have no existence and their images see not nor hear, demons are very real and avail themselves of man's imagination and his fears and arrogate to themselves the idol sacrifices. The emptiness of idols is therefore no ground for partaking of meats sacrificed to them; for “what they sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God.” (See Deut. 32:17; Psa. 95:5.) The idols and their sacrifices maybe utterly powerless; but demons hiding behind can and do thereby shut out the true God from souls and usurp the homage due to Him alone. This is the effect of heathen worship, not the intention of the worshippers or of those who partake in their sacrifices. They no more purposed to revere demons or fallen and evil spirits than the unconverted now mean to serve Satan. But they did and do so none the less. The truth puts things in their real light which the reasoning, the imagination, or the indifference of man leaves in the shade.

The Corinthians loved ease and sought to escape the cross. Why trouble, they might argue, about trifles? The idol is nothing, nor its sacrifices, nor its temple. How unwise then to offend for nothing! Communion with demons, answers the apostle, is the result. He that eats and drinks where the Lord's blessing is not, partakes in the demon's curse. We shall see in the next chapter what it is to eat and drink unworthily at the Lord's supper. Here it is the real character of the evil where one partook of things sacrificed to idols, which the vain Corinthians prided themselves on doing freely because of their superior knowledge. But no one can have fellowship with the Lord and with demons: if he tampers with demons, has he not virtually abandoned the Lord? They may delight to have and harm the Christian professor; the Lord refuses His fellowship to the idolater. If fellowship is inclusive, it is exclusive. “He that is not with me is against me,” said He Himself; “and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” (Matt. 12) “What! do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?” Love cannot but be jealous of wandering affections; it were not love if it did not resent unfaithfulness. And is He so powerless that we can despise Him with impunity? Are we stronger than He? Do we court destruction?

Notes on 1 Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, Notes on

The apostle had warned the Corinthians against carelessness and self-indulgence, instancing himself as one who must be a reprobate if he preached without keeping the body under. He now makes a pointed application of Israelitish history in scripture to clench the exhortation.

"For1 I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were2 baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they were drinking of a spiritual attendant rock (and the rock was Christ); but in the most of them God had no pleasure, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. But these things happened [as] types of us, that we should not be lusters after evil things, even as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, even as some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, even as some of them committed, and there fell in3 one day twenty-three thousand. Neither let us tempt the Lord, 4 even as some of them tempted, and were perishing 5 by the serpents. Neither murmur ye, 6according as7 some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer. Now all8 these things happened to them typically,9 and were written for our admonition, unto whom the ends of the ages have reached.” (Vers. 1-11)

Israel are adduced as a warning to those who professed Christ. Did the Corinthians boast of their privileges and endowments? They are here shown how little security such institutions as baptism and the Lord's supper confer on those who rest in them. “For [this is the true reading, , not , now, or moreover] I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” It was not only that preachers were in danger, but professors—not some, but all. Witness the ancient people of God, who similarly trusted not in God but in His acts and ordinances, their own special favors; and this from the beginning, not in days of coldness and deadness. So ready is the heart of unbelief to depart from the living God. To presume on institutions of the Lord, initiatory or even continuous, is fatal. A recent commentator regarded this passage as an inspired protest against those who, whether as individuals or sects, would lower the dignity of sacraments, or deny their necessity. To my mind the aim seems wholly different, to guard those who were baptized, and joined in the Lord's supper, from the illusion that all was therefore right and safe, that such might not grievously sin and miserably perish. The apostle solemnly disproves the superstitious and Antinomian error that men must have life because they partake of these rites. Not so; they were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, they might all therefore be said to be there and then baptized to Moses; but what was the end? It is impossible however to suppose here an outward professing mass, who had the initiatory privilege, and no more; for he takes particular pains to show that they “did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink [] the same spiritual drink; for they were drinking [] of a spiritual attendant rock (and the rock was Christ)."

Here we have figuratively the highest outward sign, that which answers to the Lord's supper, and not to baptism only. But the express point is to deny that there was necessarily life in the participants, still less efficacy in the signs. It is really the importance of the holy walk of faith in those who partook that the apostle is pressing, not at all to cry up the sacraments, still less to affirm the necessity of what nobody thought of denying.

But we must also beware of a mistaken notion which has misled most Protestants, some more partially, others completely, but all with inconsistency enough. They assume that by the expression, “all our fathers,” the Christian church is regarded as a continuation of the Jewish, and the believer as the true descendant of Abraham. Whatever is taught elsewhere under certain limits, it is plain that here the apostle teaches nothing of the sort. “For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that all our fathers,” &c, maintains the distinction which is sought to be got rid of. There is no fusion of the Jews of the past with the Gentiles who now believed. The same distinction is maintained in Ephesians and in Galatians. Within the church and in Christ the difference vanishes. There is oneness in Him, and such is the effect of the Spirit's

baptism, who forms the one body. But it is not true retrospectively, as is commonly supposed, and drawn unintelligently from, such words as these.

Again, even so sensible a writer fell into the kindred but yet grosser view, that the apostle, by the words “the same,” identifies the sacraments of the old and of the new economies. “It is a well known dogma of the schoolmen, that the sacraments of the ancient law were emblems of grace, but ours confer it. This passage is admirably suited to refute that error, for it shows that the reality of the sacrament was presented to the ancient people of God no less than to us. It is therefore a base fancy of the Sorbonists, that the holy father? under the law had the signs without the reality. I grant, indeed, that the efficacy of the signs is furnished to us at once more clearly and more abundantly from the time of Christ's manifestation in the flesh than it was possessed by the fathers.....Some explain it to mean that the Israelites ate the same meat together among themselves, and do not wish us to understand that there is a comparison between us and them; but these do not consider Paul's object. For what does he mean to say here, but that the ancient people of God were honored with the same benefits with us, and were partakers of the same sacraments, that we might not, from confiding in any peculiar privilege, imagine that we would be exempted from the punishment which they endured?"10

That the apostle is drawing an analogy between Israel and Christians is plain; but the very language employed, that their things were “types” or figures of us, should have prevented the identification either of them and us, or of the facts that resemble baptism and the Lord's supper more or less. Doubtless the doctors of the Sorbonne were wrong in virtually denying quickening faith to the fathers under the law; but Calvin is even more culpably wrong, if deluded by their error of saving sacraments now, he conceives that the signs under the law were thus efficacious also. Christ alone, received by faith, has quickening power, through the Holy Spirit, either of old or now; but now there is accomplishment, as then there was only promise. Then was only pretermission of sins; now remission, and life more abundantly, and the gift of the Spirit. This is a vast deal more than a difference in degree only, as so many Protestants dream, not to speak of Popish darkness; but their legalism, where they are not the victims of rationalism, deprives them of perception as well as power. The veil is on their eyes, though not on their hearts.

As a question of interpretation, it is evident that by all eating the same spiritual meat the apostle is speaking of the fathers, not of the Corinthians or other Christians, the point of warning and instruction being, that in the most of them God took no pleasure, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. He is speaking therefore in these verses solely of Israel, and in no way predicating the sameness of their manna and water with our signs of Christ's death, or what men call the sacraments. The sense then is, not that they were in the very same condition with us, or had the same sacraments with us, but that, though they all partook of the same spiritual meat and drink, in the most of them God had no pleasure. Title as God's people, and participation in sacred privileges, which are expressly made like to the two institutions so familiar to us in Christendom, did not save the mass from being overthrown, by divine judgments, in the wilderness.

Next the apostle shows us how the things that happened in their case are “types of us (ver. 6), that we should not be lusters after evil things, even as they also lusted.” This is general; but those things are successively specified which were perilous to the Corinthians. “Neither be idolaters, even as some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” There was, in the first place, a yielding to fleshly gratification, then pleasurable excitement followed, which told the result one sees in the scripture cited—the judgment. Were not the Corinthians in danger? “Neither let us commit fornication, even as some of them committed fornication, and fell in one day twenty-three thousand,” In the history (Num. 26) where twenty-four thousand are said to have died in the plague, it is not said “in one day,” as here, where we hear of a thousand less. To me such a difference implies the greatest accuracy, nor have I named all the points of distinction which deserve the thoughtful reader's consideration, small as the matter may seem, and to some grave men only a question of general numbers on either side of the precise amount. “Neither let us tempt the Lord, even as some of them tempted, and were perishing by the serpents” To tempt was to doubt His presence and action on their behalf, as Israel, not only “ten times” (Num. 14), but also just before Jehovah sent fiery serpents to cut them off. “Neither murmur, even as some of them murmured, and perished by the destroyer.” This, if it be not more general, seems to allude to the gainsaying of Korah and his company, which so excited the evil tongue in Israel.

“Now these things happened to them typically, and were written for our admonition, unto whom the ends of the ages have reached.” There cannot be a more important canon for our intelligent and profitable reading of these Old Testament oracles. The facts happened to them, but they were divinely cast in systematical figures, or forms of truth, for admonishing us who find ourselves at be critical a juncture of the world's history. They contain therefore far more than moral lessons, however weighty. They do disclose man's heart, and let out God's mind and affections but they have the larger and deeper instruction of events which illustrate immense principles, such as sovereign grace, on the one hand, and pure law on the other, with a mingled system of government on legal ground, while mercy and goodness availed through a mediator, which came in when the people worshipped a calf at Horeb. There is thus an orderly, as well as prophetic, character in the way these incidents are presented, which, when lit up with the light of Christ and His redemption and the truth now revealed, prove their inspiration in a self-evident way to him who has the teaching of the Holy Ghost. Israel only witnessed the facts, and the writer was enabled, by the Spirit of God, to record them in an order which was far beyond his own thoughts, or the intelligence of any before redemption; but now that this mighty work of God is accomplished, their figurative meaning stands out in the fullness of a wide system, and with a depth which reveals God, not man, as the true Author. Be it our happiness not only to know but to do the truth!

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