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COMMENTARY

**DARBY'S SYNOPSIS OF THE
BOOKS OF THE BIBLE
PART 2: NEW TESTAMENT**

by John Nelson Darby

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John Nelson Darby, 1800-1882

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1 CORINTHIANS

The Epistle to the Corinthians presents very different subjects from those which occupied us in the one addressed to the Romans. We find in it moral details, and the interior order of an assembly, with regard to which the Spirit of God here displays His wisdom in a direct way. There is no mention of elders or of other functionaries of the assembly. Through the labors of the apostle a numerous assembly had been formed (for God had much people in that city) in the midst of a very corrupt population, where riches and luxury were united with a moral disorder which had made the city a proverb. At the same time, here as elsewhere, false teachers (in general, Jews) sought to undermine the influence of the apostle. The spirit of philosophy did not fail also to exercise its baneful influence, although Corinth was not, like Athens, its principal seat. Morality and the authority of the apostle were compromised together; and the state of things was most critical. The Epistle was written from Ephesus, where the tidings of the sad state of the flock at Corinth had reached the apostle, almost at the moment when he had determined to visit them on his way into Macedonia (instead of passing along the coast of Asia Minor as he did), then returning to pay them a second visit on his way back. These tidings prevented his doing so, and, instead of visiting them to pour out his heart among them, he wrote this letter. The second epistle was written in Macedonia, when Titus had brought him word of the happy effect of the first.

The subjects of this first epistle are very easily divided into their natural order. In the first place, before he blames the Christians at Corinth to whom he writes, the apostle acknowledges all the grace which God had already bestowed on them, and would still impart. Chapter 1:1-9. From verse 10 to chapter 4:21 the subject of divisions, schools of doctrine and human wisdom, is spoken of in contrast with revelation and divine wisdom. Chapter 5, the corruption of morals, and discipline, whether by power, or in the responsibility of the assembly. Chapter 6, temporal affairs, law-suits; and again the subject of fornication, which was of primary importance for the Christians of this city. Chapter 7, marriage is

considered. Ought people to marry? The obligation of those who had already married; and the case of a converted husband or of a converted wife, whose wife or whose husband was not converted. Chapter 8, should they eat things offered to idols? Chapter 9, his apostleship. Chapter 10, their condition in general, their danger of being seduced, whether by fornication, or by idolatry, and idolatrous feasts, with the principles relating thereto, which introduces the Lord's supper. Chapter 11, questions connected with their behavior in religious matters individually or (v. 17) in the assembly. Afterwards, chapter 12, the exercise of gifts, and their true value, and the object of their use, magnifying (chap. 13) the comparative value of charity; to the end of chapter 14, ordering the exercise of gifts also, with which it is compared. Chapter 15, the resurrection, which some denied, and specially that of the saints; and chapter 16, the collections for the poor in Judea, with some salutations, and the principles of subordination to those whom God has raised up for service, even where there were no elders. It is of great value to have these directions immediately from the Lord, independent of a formal organisation, so that individual conscience and that of the body as a whole should be engaged.

But there are some other considerations as to the character and structure of the epistle which I must not pass by.

The reader may remark a difference in the address in the Corinthians and Ephesians. In the Corinthians, "To the church of God," etc., "with all that in every place call on the name of the Lord Jesus." It is the professing church, the members being assumed to be faithful, at any rate in character such till put out, and with that, every one that owned Jesus as Lord, the house; hence chapter 10:1-5. In Ephesians it is "Holy and faithful brethren," and we have the proper privileges of the body. This character of the epistle, as embracing the professing church, and recognising a local assembly as representing it in the locality, gives the epistle great importance. Further, I think it will be found that the outward professing assembly is dealt with to the middle of chapter 10 (and there the nature of the Lord's supper introduces the one body of Christ, which is treated of as to the gifts of the Spirit in chapter 12); comeliness in woman's activities in the first verses of chapter 11; and afterwards from verse 17 what befits the coming together in the assembly, and the Lord's supper, with the

government of God. Verses 1-16 do not apply to the assembly. Still, order in the local assembly is everywhere the subject; only, from chapter 1 to chapter 10:14, the professing multitude is in view, supposed however sincere, but possibly not so. From chapter 10:15 to the end of chapter 12 the body is in view.

I will now turn back to take up the thread of the contents of this epistle from the beginning. Paul was an apostle by the will of God. That was his authority, however it might be with others. Moreover the same call that made those of Corinth Christians had made him an apostle. He addresses the assembly of God at Corinth, adding a character (the application of which is evident when we consider the contents of the epistle) "sanctified in Christ Jesus." Afterwards the universality of the application of the doctrine and instructions of the epistle, and of its authority over all Christians, wherever they might be, is brought forward in this address. Happily, whatever sorrow he felt at the state of the Corinthians, the apostle could fall back upon the grace of God, and thus recognise all the grace which He had bestowed on them. But the placing them thus in relationship to God brought all the effects of His holiness to bear upon their consciences, while giving the apostle's heart the encouragement of the perfect grace of God towards them. And this grace itself became a powerful lever for the word in the hearts of the Corinthians. In the presence of such grace they ought to be ashamed of sin. Nor can there be a more remarkable testimony than is here found of reckoning on the faithfulness of God towards His people. The relationship does claim holiness: in holiness alone it is enjoyed; but it reposes on the faithfulness of God. The Corinthians were walking, as we know, badly. The apostle lets none of the evil pass; but still he declares that God was faithful and would confirm them to the end that they might be — not safe, but — blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then proceeds to blame them. what a wonderful testimony!

Paul (the Spirit Himself) thus linked the Corinthians with God; and that which He was in this connection with them had all its force upon their hearts and consciences. At the same time the use of this weapon opened their heart to all that the apostle had to say. One must be very near the Lord to be able in practice thus to look at Christians who are walking badly. It is not to spare their sins — the apostle is very far from doing

that; but it is grace which brings their own consciences to be occupied with it, as having a relationship with God that was too precious to allow them to continue in sin or to permit it.

The Epistle to the Galatians supplies us with a remarkable instance of the confidence thus inspired; compare chapters 4:20; 5:10.

The Corinthians were enriched by God with His gifts, and His testimony was thus confirmed among them, so that they came behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of the Lord, the fulfillment of all things. Solemn day! for which God, who had called them, confirmed them in His faithfulness, that they might be without reproach in that day, called as they were to the fellowship and communion of His Son Jesus Christ. Short but precious exposition of the grace and faithfulness of God, serving as a basis (if their condition did not allow the apostle to develop it as he did to the Ephesians) to all the exhortations and instructions which he addressed to the Corinthians in order to strengthen them and direct their wavering steps.

The apostle first takes up the folly of the Corinthians in making the chief christian ministers and Christ Himself heads of schools. Christ was not divided. They had not been baptised unto the name of Paul. He had indeed, on occasion, baptised a few; but his mission was to preach, not to baptise.* It was in virtue of, and according to, Acts 26:17, and 13:2 to 4, and not Matthew 28:19. Moreover, all this human wisdom was but foolishness, which God brought to nothing: the preaching of the cross was the power of God; and God had chosen the weak things, the things of nought, foolish things according to the world, to annihilate the wisdom and strength of the world, in order that the gospel should be evidently the power of God. The Jews asked for a sign, the Greeks sought for wisdom; but God caused Christ crucified to be preached, a scandal to the Jews, foolishness to the Greeks, but to them which are called the power of God. By things that are not He brought to nought things that are, because His weakness is stronger than the strength of the world; His foolishness wiser than the wisdom of the age. The flesh shall not glory in His presence. God dealt with conscience, though in grace, according to the true position of responsible man, and did not subject Himself to the judgment and reasonings of man's mind, wholly incompetent thereto, and which put him

out of his place as if he could judge of God. But, besides this, the Christian was more even than the object of God's instruction; he was himself of God in Christ Jesus; of God he had his life, his being, his position as a Christian. And Christ was unto him, from God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption — all in contrast with the pretensions of the human mind, with the false righteousness of the Jew under the law, with the means and the measure of the sanctification it supplied, and with the weakness of man, the last trace of which God will remove in the deliverance He will accomplish by His power in Christ when He shall complete the work of His grace. Thus we are of God, and Christ is everything for us on God's part, in order that he who glories may glory in the Lord: a brief but mighty testimony to what Christianity is in its elements.

[* This statement is the more remarkable, as he had a special revelation as to the Lord's supper. But that ordinance has reference to the unity of the body, which was specially the testimony of the apostle. The twelve were sent to baptise the nations (Matthew 28).]

It was in this spirit that Paul had come among them at first; he would know nothing but Christ,* and Christ in His humiliation and abasement, object of contempt to senseless men. His speech was not attractive with the carnal persuasiveness of a factitious eloquence: but it was the expression of the presence and action of the Spirit, and of the power which accompanied that presence. Thus their faith rested, not on the fair words of man, which another more eloquent or more subtle might upset, but on the power of God — a solid foundation for our feeble souls — blessed be His name for it!

[* Take notice here, that Paul does not say he would know nothing but the cross, as some persons — and even Christians — wrongly apply it. He would know nothing but Christ in contrast with philosophy among these Pagans, and Christ in the most humbled form, in order to overturn the pride of man. He goes on to inform us, that among those who were initiated into Christianity he taught wisdom, but it was the wisdom of God, revealed by Him who searches the deep things of God Himself. It is a very grievous abuse that is often made of this passage (incorrectly quoted besides).]

Nevertheless, when once the soul was taught and established in the doctrine of salvation in Christ, there was a wisdom of which the apostle spoke; not the wisdom of this present age, nor of the princes of this age, which perish, wisdom and all; but the wisdom of God in a mystery, a

secret counsel of God (revealed now by the Spirit), ordained in His settled purpose unto our glory before the world was — a counsel which, with all their wisdom, none of the princes of this world knew. Had they known it, they would not have crucified the One in whose Person it was all to be accomplished.

The apostle does not touch the subject of the mystery, because he had to feed them as babes, and only in order to put it in contrast with the false wisdom of the world; but the way in which this wisdom was communicated is important. That which had never entered into the heart of man* God had revealed by His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. It is only the spirit of a man which is in him that knows the things which he has not communicated. So no one knows the things of God save the Spirit of God. Now it is the Spirit of God which the apostle and the other vessels of revelation had received, that they might know the things which are freely given of God. This is the knowledge of the things themselves in the vessels of revelation.

Afterwards this instrument of God was to communicate them. He did so, not in words which the art of man taught, but which the Spirit — which God — taught, communicating spiritual things by a spiritual medium.** The communication was by the Spirit as well as the thing communicated. There was yet one thing wanting that this revelation might be possessed by others — the reception of these communications. This also required the action of the Spirit. The natural man did not receive them; and they are spiritually discerned.

[* The passage is often quoted to show the things are so great one cannot know them. Whereas it is a quotation from Isaiah to show that what could not then be known (when the evil was there, and man was dealt with according to what he was) is now revealed, now that man is in glory in the Person of Christ, and the Holy Ghost come down to show us what is there. Christianity is not Judaism.]

[** I have no doubt that this is the meaning of the passage. The means were of the same nature as the thing for which they were employed (v. 13).]

The source, the medium of communication, the reception, all was of the Spirit. Thus the spiritual man judges all things; he is judged of no man. The power of the Spirit in him makes his judgment true and just, but gives him motives and a walk that are unintelligible to one who has not the Spirit. Very simple as to that which is said — nothing can be more important

than that which is here taught. Alas! the Corinthians, whether when the apostle was at Corinth, or at the time of writing this letter, were not in a condition to have the mystery communicated to them — a grievous humiliation to their philosophic pride, but therefore a good remedy for it.

They were not natural men; but they were carnal (not spiritual) men, so that the apostle had to feed them with milk and not with meat which was only fit for those that were of full age. That with which they nourished their pride was a proof of this — their divisions into schools of doctrine. Paul, no doubt, had planted; Apollos watered. It was well. But it was God alone who gave the increase. Moreover the apostle had laid the foundation of this building of God, the assembly at Corinth; others had built since — had carried on the work of the edification of souls. Let every one take heed. There was but one foundation; it was laid. But in connection with it, they might teach things solid or worthless and form souls by one or the other — perhaps even introduce souls won by such vain doctrines among the saints. The work would be proved, sooner or later, by some day of trial. If they had wrought in the work of God, with solid materials, the work would stand; if not, it would come to nothing. The effect, the fruit of labor, would be destroyed — the man who had wrought be saved, because he had built on the foundation — had true faith in Christ. Yet the shaking, caused by the failure of all that he had thought genuine,* would be apt, for himself, to shake the consciousness of his connection with, and confidence in, the foundation. He should be saved as through the fire. He who had wrought according to God should receive the fruit of his labor. If any one corrupted the temple of God — introduced that which destroyed fundamental truths, he should be destroyed himself.

[* Remark here, the very important instruction as to the assembly viewed as God's building. In Matthew 16 we have Christ's building, and Satan's power cannot prevail against it. This building will go on till complete at the end. Hence in 1 Peter 2 and Ephesians 2 we have no workman, and the stones come, and the building grows. It is Christ's own work: He builds, and the building is not yet complete. Here it is God's building; but there is a builder, and man's responsibility comes in. There is a wise master-builder, or it may be those who build with wood, hay, and stubble — yea, even those who corrupt. In Ephesians 2 there is also a present building, but it is the fact viewed abstractedly. Here the responsibility is formally stated. The confusion of Christ's building (not yet finished) and man's building, the applying the promise made to one to the other which rests on man's responsibility and is a present building on earth, is one grand source of Popish and Puseyite errors. Against Christ's work nothing can

prevail. Man may build with wood and hay and stubble, and his work be destroyed, as it will.]

The subject then is ministerial labor, carried on by means of certain doctrines, either good, worthless, or subversive of the truth; and the fruits which this labor would produce. And there are three cases; the work good as well as the workman; the work vain, but the workman saved; the corrupter of God's temple — here the workman would be destroyed.

Finally, if any one desired to be wise in this world, let him become unintelligent in order to be wise. God counted the wisdom of the wise as foolishness, and would take them in their own craftiness. But in this the saints were below their privileges. All things were theirs, since they were the children of God. "All things are yours" — Paul, Apollos, all things — you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

As for the apostle and the laborers, they were to consider them as stewards employed by the Lord. And it was to Him that Paul committed the judgment of his conduct. He cared little for the judgment man might form respecting him. He was not conscious of anything wrong, but that did not justify him. He who judged (examined) him was the Lord. And, after all, who was it that gave to the one or to the other that which he could use in service?

Paul had thought well, in treating this subject, to use names that they were using in their carnal divisions, and those, especially himself and Apollos, which could not be used to pretend he was getting rid of others to set up himself; but what was the real state of the case? They had despised the apostle. Yes, he says, we have been put to shame, despised, persecuted, in distress; you have been at ease, like kings — a reproach in accordance with their own pretensions, their own reproaches — a reproach that touched them to the quick, if they had any feeling left. Paul and his companions had been as the offscouring of the earth for Christ's sake, while the Corinthians were reposing in the lap of luxury and ease. Even while writing to them, this was still his position. "Would to God," he says, "ye did reign" (that the day of Christ were come) "in order that we might reign with you." He felt his sufferings, although he bore them joyfully. They, the apostles, were set forth on God's part as though to be the last great spectacle in those marvelous games of which this world was the

amphitheatre; and as His witnesses they were exposed to the fury of a brutal world. Patience and meekness were their only weapons.

Nevertheless he did not say these things to put them to shame, he warned them as his beloved sons; for his sons they were. Though they might have ten thousand teachers, he had begotten them all by the gospel. Let them then follow him. In all this there is the deep working of the affection of a noble heart, wounded to the utmost, but wounded in order to bring out an affection that rose above his grief. It is this which so strikingly distinguishes the work of the Spirit in the New Testament, as in Christ Himself. The Spirit has come into the bosom of the assembly, takes part in her afflictions — her difficulties. He fills the soul of one who cares for the assembly,* making him feel that which is going on — feel it according to God, but with a really human heart. Who could cause all this to be felt for strangers, except the Spirit of God? Who would enter into these things with all the perfection of the wisdom of God, in order to act upon the heart, to deliver the conscience, to form the understanding, and to set it free, except the Spirit of God? Still the apostolic individual bond was to be formed, to be strengthened. It was the essence of the work of the Holy Ghost in the assembly to bind all together in this way. We see the man: otherwise it would not have been Paul and his dear brethren. We see the Holy Ghost, whom the latter had grieved, no doubt, and who acts in the former with divine wisdom, to guide them in the right way with all the affection of their father in Christ. Timothy, his son in the faith and in heart, might meet the case. Paul had sent him; Paul himself would soon be there. Some said, No, he would not, and took occasion to magnify themselves in the absence of the apostle; but he would come himself and put everything to the test; for the kingdom of God was not in word, but in power. Did they wish him to come with a rod, or in love?

[* “The Spirit joins also its help to our weakness,” Romans 8:26.]

Here this part of the epistle ends. Admirable specimen of tenderness and of authority! of authority sure enough of itself on the part of God, to be able to act with perfect tenderness towards those who were thoroughly dear to him, in the hope of not being forced to exercise itself in another way. The most powerful truths are unfolded in so doing.

CHAPTER 5. He begins to treat the details of conduct and of discipline; and, first of all, the carnal defilement carried on in their midst to the last degree of hardness of conscience. Those who sought their own personal influence as teachers allowed them to go on in it. He condemns it without reservation. Discipline follows; for Christ had been offered up as the Paschal Lamb, and they were to keep the feast without leaven, keeping themselves from the old leaven; in order that they might be in fact, what they were before God — an unleavened lump. As to discipline, it was this: before they knew that it was their duty to cut off the wicked person, and that God had given them the power and imposed on them the obligation to do so, a moral sense of evil ought, at least, to have led them to humble themselves before God, and to pray that He would take him away. On the contrary, they were puffed up with pride. But now the apostle teaches them what must be done, and enforces it with all his apostolic authority. He was among them in spirit if not in body, and with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, they being gathered together, to deliver such a one to Satan; but as a brother for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved in the day of Christ.

Here all the power of the assembly in its normal condition, united to and led by the apostolic energy, is displayed. Its members; the apostle, vessel and channel of the power of the Spirit; and the power of the Lord Jesus Himself, the Head of the body. Now the world is the theatre of Satan's power; the assembly, delivered from his power, is the habitation of God by the Spirit. If the enemy had succeeded in drawing aside by the flesh a member of Christ, so that he dishonors the Lord by walking after the flesh as men of the world do, he is put outside, and by the power of the Spirit, as then exercised in their midst by the apostle, delivered up to the enemy, who is in spite of himself the servant of the purposes of God (as in the case of Job), in order that the flesh of the Christian (which, from his not being able to reckon it dead, had brought him morally under the power of Satan) should be physically destroyed and broken down. Thus would he be set free from the illusions in which the flesh held him captive. His mind would learn how to discern the difference between good and evil, to know what sin was. The judgment of God would be realised within him, and would not be executed upon him at that day when it would be definitive for the condemnation of those who should undergo it. This was a great

blessing, although its form was terrible. Marvellous example of the government of God, which uses the adversary's enmity against the saints as an instrument for their spiritual blessing! We have such a case fully set before us in the history of Job. Only we have here, in addition, the proof that in its normal state, apostolic power* being there, the assembly exercised this judgment herself, having discernment by the Spirit and the authority of Christ to do it. Moreover, whatever may be the spiritual capacity of the assembly to wield this sword of the Lord (for this is power), her positive and ordinary duty is stated at the end of the chapter.

[* The apostle (1 Timothy 1:20) exercises this power alone as to certain blasphemers. It is power, not mere duty, and it is important clearly to distinguish the two: though the apostle here did it in and with the gathered assembly, yet he says, "I have judged already to deliver such an one to Satan. In verse 13 we have the positive duty of the assembly without the question of special power.]

The assembly was an unleavened lump, looked at in the Spirit as an assembly, and not individually. It is thus that we must view it, for it is only in the Spirit that it is so. The assembly is seen of God as being before Him in the new nature in Christ. Such she ought to be in practice by the power of the Spirit, in spite of the existence of the flesh, which by faith she ought to count as dead, and allow nothing in her walk that is contrary to this state. The assembly ought to be a "new lump," and was not if evil was allowed, and, consequently, ought to purge herself from the old leaven, because she is unleavened in God's thoughts. Such is her position before God. For Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us: therefore we ought to keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. They did wrong therefore in boasting while this evil was in their midst, however great their gifts might be. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. The evil did not attach to that man alone who was personally guilty of it. The assembly was not clear till the evil was put out (2 Corinthians 7:11). They could not dissociate themselves in the intercourse of ordinary life from all those who, in the world, walked corruptly, for in that case they would have to go out of the world. But if any one called himself a brother and walked in this corruption, with such a one they ought not even to eat. God judges those who are outside. The assembly must herself judge those that are within, and put out whatever must be called "wicked."

CHAPTER 6:1-11 treats the subject of wrongs. It was shameful that those who were to judge the world and the angels should be incapable of judging the paltry affairs of this world. Let the least esteemed in the assembly be employed in this service. Rather should they bear the wrong, whereas they did wrong themselves. But the wicked and the unrighteous would assuredly not inherit the kingdom. What a wonderful mixture we have here of astonishing revelations, of a morality that is unchangeable whatever may be the divine supremacy of grace, and of ecclesiastical order and discipline! The assembly is united to Christ. When He shall judge the world and pronounce the doom of the angels, she will be associated with Him and take part in His judgment, for she has His Spirit and His mind. Nothing however that is unrighteous shall enter into that kingdom, for in effect how could evil be judged by any that took pleasure in it? Christians should not go to a worldly tribunal for justice, but have recourse to the arbitration of the brethren — a service which, as entering so little into christian spirituality, was suited to the weakest among them. Moreover the proper thing was rather to suffer the wrong. Be it as it might, the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom.

Judaism, which took pleasure in a carnal sanctity of outward regulations, and the spirit of the world with conformity to its ways, were the two dangers that threatened the assembly at Corinth — dangers, indeed, which exist for the heart of man at all times and in all places. With regard to meats the rule is simple: perfect liberty, since all is allowed — true liberty, in that we are in bondage to none of these things. Meats and the belly, as in relationship to each other, should both perish; the body has a higher destiny — it is for the Lord, and the Lord for it. God has raised up Christ from the dead, and He will raise us up again by His power. The body belongs to this and not to meats.

But the doctrine that the body is for Christ decided another question, to which the depraved habits of the Corinthians gave rise. All fornication is forbidden. To us, with our present Christian habits of mind, it is a thing of course — to Pagans, new; but the doctrine exalts every subject. Our bodies are the members of Christ. Another truth connected with this is of great importance: if (by union according to the flesh) two were one body, he who is united to the Lord is one spirit. The Spirit whose fullness is in

Christ is the same Spirit who dwells in me and unites me to Him. Our bodies are His temples. What a mighty truth when we think of it!

Moreover we are not our own, but were bought with a price — the blood of Christ offered for us. Therefore we ought to glorify God in our bodies, which are His — powerful and universal motive, governing the whole conduct without exception. Our true liberty is to belong to God. All that is for oneself is stolen from the rights of Him who has bought us for His own. All that a slave was, or gained, was the property of his master; he was not the owner of himself. Thus it was with the Christian. Outside that, he is the wretched slave of sin and of Satan — selfishness his rule, and eternal banishment from the source of love his end. Horrible thought! In Christ we are the special objects and the vessels of that love. We have here two mighty motives for holiness: the value of Christ's blood, at which we are purchased; also the fact that we are the temples of the Holy Ghost.

CHAPTER 7. The apostle proceeds by answering a question in connection with the subject he had been treating — the will of God with regard to the relationship between man and woman. They do well who remain outside this relationship in order to walk with the Lord according to the Spirit, and not to yield in anything to their nature. God had instituted marriage — woe to him who should speak ill of it! but sin has come in, and all that is of nature, of the creature, is marred. God has introduced a power altogether above and outside nature — that of the Spirit. To walk according to that power is the best thing; it is to walk outside the sphere in which sin acts. But it is rare; and positive sins are for the most part the effect of standing apart from that which God has ordained according to nature. In general then for this reason, every man should have his own wife: and the union once formed, he had no longer power over himself. As to the body, the husband belonged to his wife, the wife to her husband. If, by mutual consent, they separated for awhile that they might give themselves to prayer and to spiritual exercises, the bond was to be immediately acknowledged again, lest the heart, not governing itself, should give Satan occasion to come in and distress the soul, and destroy its confidence in God and in His love — lest he should tempt by distressing doubts (it is for, not by incontinency) a heart that aimed at too much, and failed in it.

This permission, however, and this direction which recommended Christians to marry, was not a commandment from the Lord, given by inspiration, but the fruit of the apostle's experience — an experience to which the presence of the Holy Ghost was not wanting.* He would rather that every one were like himself; but every one had, in this respect, his gift from God. To the unmarried and the widows, it is good, he says, to abide as he himself was; but if they could not subdue their nature and remain in calm purity, it was better to marry. Unsubduedness of desire was more hurtful than the bond of marriage. But as to marriage itself, there was no longer room for the counsel of experience, the commandment of the Lord was positive. The woman was not to separate from the man, nor the man from the woman; and if they separated, the bond was not broken; they must remain unmarried or else be reconciled.

[* Note here, we have formally distinguished, what infidels of the modern school have sought to confound, spiritual thoughts as a man, and inspiration. The apostle gives his thoughts and judgment as a spiritual man, his mind animated and guided by the Spirit, and contrasts it with inspiration and what the Lord said. How wonderfully the Lord has provided in scripture for everything! Compare verse 25.]

But there was a case more complicated, when the man was converted and the wife unconverted, or vice versa. According to the law a man who had married a woman of the Gentiles (and was consequently profane and unclean) defiled himself, and was compelled to send her away; and their children had no right to Jewish privileges; they were rejected as unclean (see Ezra 10:3). But under grace it was quite the contrary. The converted husband sanctified the wife, and vice versa, and their children were reckoned clean before God; they had part in the ecclesiastical rights of their parent. This is the sense of the word "holy," in connection with the question of order and of outward relationship towards God, which was suggested by the obligation under the law to send away wife and children in a similar case. Thus the believer was not to send away his wife, nor to forsake an unbelieving husband. If the unbeliever forsook the believer definitively, the latter (man or woman) was free — "let him depart." The brother was no longer bound to consider the one who had forsaken him as his wife, nor the sister the man who had forsook her as her husband. But they were called to peace, and not to seek this separation, for how did the believer know if he should not be the means of the unbeliever's

conversion? For we are under grace. Moreover every one was to walk as God had distributed to him.

As regarded occupations and positions in this world, the general rule was that every one should continue in the state wherein he was called; but it must be “with God” — doing nothing that would not be to His glory. If the state was in itself of a nature contrary to His will, it was sin; clearly he could not remain in it with God. But the general rule was to remain and glorify God in it.

The apostle had spoken of marriage, of the unmarried and of widows; he had been questioned also with respect to those who had never entered into any relationship with woman. On this point he had no commandment from the Lord. He could only give his judgment as one who had received mercy of the Lord to be faithful. It was good to remain in that condition, seeing what the world was and the difficulties of a christian life. If they were bound to a wife, let them not seek to be loosed. If free, they would do well to remain so. Thus if they married, they did well; not marrying, they did better. He who had not known a woman did not sin if he married, but he should have trouble after the flesh in his life here below. (It will be observed, that it is not the daughter of a Christian that is here spoken of, but his own personal condition.) If he stood firm, and had power over his own will, it was the better way; if he married, he still did well; if he did not marry, it was better. It was the same with a woman; and if the apostle said that according to his judgment it was better, he had the Spirit of God. His experience — if he had no commandment — had not been gained without the Spirit, but it was that of a man who could say (if any one had a right to say it) that he had the Spirit of God.

Moreover the time was short: the married were to be as having no wives; buyers, as having no possession; they who used the world, not using it as though it were theirs. Only the apostle would have them without carefulness or distraction, that they might serve the Lord. If by reckoning themselves dead to nature this effect was not produced, they gained nothing, they lost by it. When married they were pre-occupied with things below, in order to please their wives and to provide for their children. But they enjoyed a repose of mind, in which nature did not claim her rights with a will that they had failed to silence, and holiness of walk and of heart

was maintained. If the will of nature was subjugated and silenced, they served the Lord without distraction, they lived according to the Spirit and not according to nature, even in those things which God had ordained as good with respect to nature.

As to the slave, he might console himself as being the Lord's free-man; but (seeing the difficulty of reconciling the will of a pagan or even an unspiritual master with the will of God) if he could be made free, he should embrace the opportunity.

Two things strike us here in passing: the holiness which all these directions breathe with regard to that which touches so closely the desires of the flesh. The institutions of God, formed for man when innocent, are maintained in all their integrity, in all their authority, a safeguard now against the sin to which man is incited by his flesh. The Spirit introduces a new energy above nature, which in no wise weakens the authority of the institution. If any one can live above nature in order to serve the Lord in freedom, it is a gift of God — a grace which he does well to profit by. A second very important principle flows from this chapter. The apostle distinguishes accurately between that which he has by inspiration, and his own spiritual experience — that which the Spirit gave him in connection with the exercises of his individual life — spiritual wisdom, however exalted it might be. On certain points he had no commandment from the Lord. He gave the conclusion at which he had arrived, through the help of the Spirit of God, in a life of remarkable faithfulness, and aided by the Spirit whom he but little grieved. But it was not a commandment of the Lord. On other points that which he did not except in this manner was to be received as the commandment of the Lord (compare chap. 14:37). That is to say, he affirms the inspiration, properly so called, of his writings — they were to be received as emanating from the Lord Himself — distinguishing this inspiration from his own spiritual competency, a principle of all importance.

After this the apostle answers (chap. 8) the question respecting meats offered to idols, which gives occasion to a few words on the value of knowledge. Simply as knowledge, it is worth nothing. If we look at it as knowledge that we possess, it does but puff us up; it is something in me, my knowledge. True christian knowledge unfolded something in God. By

means of that which is revealed, God, better known, became greater to the soul. It was in Him the thing known, and not a knowledge in me by which I made myself greater. He who loves God is known of Him. As to the question itself, love decided it. Since such a question had arisen, it was evident that all consciences were not brought into full light by spiritual intelligence. Now undoubtedly the idol was nothing: there was but one God, the Father; and one Lord, Jesus Christ. But if he who was strong sat at meat in the idol's temple, another who had not full light would be encouraged to do the same, and his conscience would be unfaithful and defiled. Thus I lead into sin, and, as far as depends on me, I ruin a brother for whom Christ died. I sin against Christ Himself in so doing. Thus, if meat causes a brother to stumble, let me altogether abstain from it rather than be a snare to him. Here the apostle treats the question as arising among the brethren, so as that which regards the conscience of each, choosing to maintain in all its force that in fact an idol was nothing but a piece of wood or stone. It was important to set the question on this ground. The prophets had done so before. But this was not all that there was to say. There was the working of Satan and of wicked spirits to explain, and this he does further on.

We may remark in passing the expression, "To us there is but one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ." The apostle does not here treat the abstract question of the Lord's divinity, but the connection of men with that which was above them in certain relationships. Pagans had many gods, and many lords, intermediate beings. Not so Christians. For them is the Father abiding in the absoluteness of the divinity, and Christ who, become man, has taken the place and the relationship of Lord towards us. The position, and not the nature, is the subject. It is the same thing in chapter 12:2-6, where the contrast is with the multitude of spirits whom the Pagans knew, and the number of gods and lords. Nevertheless every one was not, in fact, thus delivered from the influence of false gods on his imagination. They were still perhaps, in spite of himself, something to him. He had conscience of the idol, and if he ate that which had been offered to it, it was not to him simply that which God had given for food. The idea of the existence of a real and powerful being had a place in his heart, and thus his conscience was defiled. Now they were not better in God's sight for having eaten, and by eating they had put a stumbling block

in their brother's way, and, so far as the act of those who had full light was concerned, had ruined him by defiling his conscience and estranging him from God in unfaithfulness. This was sinning against Christ, who had died for that precious soul. If God intervened to shield him from the result of this unfaithfulness, that in nowise diminished the sin of him who led the weak one to act against his conscience. In itself that which separates us from God ruins us in that which regards our responsibility. Thus he who has the love of Christ in his heart would rather never eat meat than do that which would make a brother unfaithful, and tend to ruin a soul which Christ has redeemed.

The apostle was exposed to the accusations of false teachers, who asserted that he carried on his evangelisation and his labors from interested motives, and that he took the property of Christians, availing himself of their devotedness. He speaks therefore of his ministry. He declares openly that he is an apostle, an eye-witness of the glory of Christ, having seen the Lord. Moreover, if he was not an apostle to others, doubtless he was to the Corinthians, for he had been the means of their conversion. Now the will of the Lord was that they who preached the gospel should live of the gospel. He had a right to take with him a sister as his wife, even as Peter did, and the brethren of the Lord. Nevertheless he had not used this right. Obligated by the call of the Lord to preach the gospel, woe unto him if he failed to do it! His glory was to do it gratuitously, so as to take away all occasion from those who sought it. For, being free from all, he had made himself the servant of all, that he might win as many as he could. Observe that this was in his service; it was not accommodating himself to the world, in order to escape the offense of the cross. He put this plainly forward (chap. 2:2); but in preaching it, he adapted himself to the religious capacity and to the modes of thought belonging to the one and to the other, in order to gain access for the truth into their minds; and he did the same in his manner of conduct among them. It was the power of charity which denied itself in all things, in order to be the servant of all, and not the selfishness which indulged itself under the pretense of gaining others. He did so in every respect for the sake of the gospel, desiring, as he said, to be a partaker with it, for he personifies it as doing the work of God's love in the world.

It was thus they should run; and, in order to run thus, one must deny oneself. In this way the apostle acted. He did not run with uncertain steps, as one who did not see the true end, or who did not pursue it seriously as a known thing. He knew well what he was pursuing, and he pursued it really, evidently, according to its nature. Every one could judge by his walk. He did not trifle as a man who beats the air-easy prowess. In seeking that which was holy and glorious, he knew the difficulties he resisted in the personal conflict with the evil that sought to obstruct his victory. As a vigorous wrestler, he kept under his body, which would have hindered him. There was reality in his pursuit of heaven: he would tolerate nothing that opposed it. Preaching to others was not all. He might do that, and it might be, as regards himself, labor in vain; he might lose everything — be rejected afterwards himself, if not personally a Christian. He was a Christian first of all, then a preacher, and a good preacher, because he was a Christian first. Thus, also (for the beginning of chapter 10 connects itself with the close of chapter 9), others might make a profession, partake of the initiatory and other ordinances, as he might be a preacher, and after all not be owned of God. This warning is a testimony to the condition to which, in part at least, the assembly of God was already reduced: a warning always useful, but which supposes that those who bear the name of Christian, and have partaken of the ordinances of the church, no longer inspire that confidence which would receive them without question as the true sheep of Christ. The passage distinguishes between participation in christian ordinances and the possession of salvation: a distinction always true, but which it is not necessary to make when christian life is bright in those who have part in the outward privileges of the assembly.

CHAPTER 10. The apostle then gives the Corinthians the ways of God with Israel in the wilderness, as instruction with regard to His ways with us, declaring that the things which happened to them were types or figures which serve as patterns for us: an important principle, and one which ought to be clearly apprehended, in order to profit by it. It is not Israel who is the figure, but that which happened to Israel — the ways of God with Israel. The things themselves happened to Israel; they were written for our instruction who find ourselves at the close of God's dispensations. That which shall follow will be the judgment of God, when these examples will no longer serve for the life of faith.

Two principles are next established which also have great practical importance: “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” This is our responsibility. On the other side we have the faithfulness of God. He does not permit us to be tempted beyond our strength, but provides a way of escape in order that we may not stumble.

He enjoins, with regard to idolatry, that holy fear which avoids the occasion of doing evil, the occasion of falling. There is association and communion through the table of which we partake with that which is on it; and we Christians, being many, are but one bread and one body,* inasmuch as we share the same bread at the Lord’s supper. Those in Israel who ate of the sacrifices were partakers of the altar — were identified with it. So those who ate of idol’s meat as such were identified with the idol it was offered to. Was this to say that the idol was anything? No. But as it is written (Deuteronomy 32), “The things which the Gentiles offered, they offered to demons and not to God.” Should a Christian then, partake of the table of demons? The table was the table of demons, the cup the cup of demons — an important principle for the assembly of God. Would one provoke the Lord by putting Him on a level with demons? Allusion is again made to Deuteronomy 32:21. The apostle repeats his principle already established, that he had liberty in every respect, but that on the one hand he would not put himself under the power of anything; on the other, being free, he would use his liberty for the spiritual good of all. To follow out this rule, these are his instructions: Whatsoever was sold in the market they should eat without question of conscience. If any man said, “This was sacrificed to idols,” it was a proof that he had conscience of an idol. They should then not eat of it, because of his conscience. For as to him who was free, his liberty could not be judged by the conscience of the other; for, as to doctrine, and where there was knowledge, the apostle recognises it as a truth that the idol was nothing. The creature was simply the creature of God. Communion with that which was false I ought to avoid for myself, especially in that which relates to communion with God Himself. I should deny myself the liberty which the truth gave me, rather than wound the weak conscience of others.

[* It is here the apostle comes to the inner circle of the body of Christ, the true assembly of God united together by the Holy Ghost, of which the Lord’s supper is the expression.]

Moreover in all things, even in eating or drinking, we ought to see the glory of God, and do all to His glory; giving no offense by using our liberty, either to Jew or Gentile, or the assembly of God; following the apostle's example, who, denying himself, sought to please all for their edification.

Having given these rules in answer to questions of detail, he turns to that which regarded the presence and action of the Holy Ghost; which also introduces the subject of the conduct proper for them in their assemblies.

Observe here the way in which the apostle grounded his replies with regard to details on the highest and fundamental principles. This is the manner of Christianity (compare Titus 2:10-14). He introduces God and charity, putting man in connection with God Himself. In that which follows we have also a striking example of this. The subject is a direction for women.

They were not to pray without having their heads covered. To decide this question, simply of what was decent and becoming, the apostle lays open the relationship and the order of the relationship subsisting between the depositories of God's glory and Himself,* and brings in the angels, to whom Christians, as a spectacle set before them, should present that of order according to the mind of God. The head of the woman is the man; that of man is Christ; of Christ, God. This is the order of power, ascending to Him who is supreme. And then, with respect to their relationship to each other, he adds, the man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man. And as to their relations with other creatures, intelligent and conscious of the order of the ways of God, they were to be covered because of the angels, who are spectators of the ways of God in the dispensation of redemption, and of the effect which this marvelous intervention was to produce. Elsewhere (see note below) it is added, in reference to the history of that which took place, the man was not deceived; but the woman, being deceived, transgressed first. Let us add — from the passage we are considering — that, as to creation, the man was not taken from the woman, but the woman from the man. Nevertheless the man is not without the woman, nor the woman without the man, in the Lord; but all things are of God; and all this to regulate a question of modesty as to women, when in praying they were before the eyes of others.** The result — in that which concerns the details — is that the

man was to have his head uncovered, because he represented authority, and in this respect was invested (as to his position) with the glory of God, of whom he was the image. The woman was to have her head covered, as a token that she was subject to the man (her covering being a token of the power to which she was subject). Man however could not do without woman, nor woman without man. Finally the apostle appeals to the order of creation, according to which a woman's hair, her glory and ornament, showed, in contrast with the hair of man, that she was not made to present herself with the boldness of man before all. Given as a veil, her hair showed that modesty, submission — a covered head that hid itself, as it were, in that submission and in that modesty — was her true position, her distinctive glory. Moreover, if any one contested the point, it was a custom which neither the apostle nor the assemblies allowed.

[* In 1 Timothy 2:11-15 the moral effect of the circumstances of the fall is introduced, as giving the woman her true place in the assembly with regard to man.]

[** We are not as yet come to the order in the assembly. That commences with verse 17.]

Observe also here that, however man may have fallen, divine order in creation never loses its value as the expression of the mind of God. Thus also in James, man is said to be created in the image of God. As to his moral condition, he needs (now that he has knowledge of good and of evil) to be born again, created in righteousness and in true holiness, that he may be the image of God as now revealed through Christ; but his position in the world, as the head and center of all things — which no angel has been — is the idea of God Himself, as well as the position of the woman, the companion of his glory but subject to him; an idea which will be gloriously accomplished in Christ, and with respect to the woman in the assembly; but which is true in itself, being the constituted order of God, and always right as such: for the ordinance of God creates order, although, no doubt, His wisdom and His perfection are displayed in it.

The reader will remark, that this order in creation, as well as that which is established in the counsels of God in respect of the woman, of the man, of Christ, and of God Himself, and the fact that men — at least Christians under redemption — are a spectacle to angels (compare chap. 4:9), subjects which here I can only indicate, have the highest interest.*

[* The first chapter of Genesis gives us man in his place in creation as from God the Creator; the second, his own relationship with Jehovah God, where he was placed in connection with Him, and the woman's with himself.]

The apostle afterwards touches upon the subject of their assemblies. In verse 2 he had praised them; but on this point he could not do so (v. 17). Their assemblies manifested a spirit of division. This division concerned the distinction between the rich and the poor, but, as it seems, gave rise to others: at least others were necessary to make manifest those who were really approved of God. Now these divisions had the character of sects; that is to say, particular opinions divided Christians of the same assembly, of the assembly of God, into schools; they were hostile to each other, although they took the Lord's supper together — if indeed it could be said that they took it together. Jealousies that had arisen between the rich and the poor tended to foster the sectarian division. If, I observed, it could be said that they broke bread together; for each one took care to eat his own supper before the others did so, and some were hungry while others took their fill. This was not really eating the Lord's supper.

The apostle, guided by the Holy Ghost, seizes the opportunity to declare to them the nature and the import of this ordinance. We may notice here, that the Lord had taught it him by an especial revelation — proof of the interest that belongs to it,* and that it is a part of the Lord's mind in the entire christian walk, to which He attaches importance in view of our moral condition, and of the state of our spiritual affections individually, as well as those of the assembly. In the joy of christian liberty, amid the powerful effects of the presence of the Holy Ghost — of the gifts by which He manifested Himself in the assembly, the Lord's death, His broken body, was brought to mind, and, as it were, made present to faith as the basis and foundation of everything. This act of love, this simple and solemn deed, weak and empty in appearance, preserved all its importance. The Lord's body had been offered for us! to which the Holy Ghost Himself was to bear witness, and which was to maintain all its importance in the Christian's heart, and to be the foundation and center of the edifice of the assembly. Whatever might be the power that shone forth in the assembly, the heart was brought back to this. The body of the Lord Himself had been offered,** the lips of Jesus had claimed our remembrance. This moral equilibrium is very important to saints. Power, and the exercise of gifts do not necessarily act upon the conscience and the

heart of those to whom they are committed, nor of those always who enjoy their display. And, although God is present (and when we are in a good state, that is felt), still it is a man who speaks and who acts upon others; he is prominent. In the Lord's supper the heart is brought back to a point in which it is entirely dependent, in which man is nothing, in which Christ and His love are everything, in which the heart is exercised, and the conscience remembers that it has needed cleansing, and that it has been cleansed by the work of Christ — that we depend absolutely on this grace. The affections also are in the fullest exercise. It is important to remember this. The consequences that followed forgetfulness of the import of this ordinance confirmed its importance and the Lord's earnest desire that they should take heed to it. The apostle is going to speak of the power of the Holy Ghost manifested in His gifts, and of the regulations necessary to maintain order and provide for edification where they were exercised in the assembly; but, before doing so, he places the Lord's supper as the moral center, the object of the assembly. Let us remark some of the thoughts of the Spirit in connection with this ordinance.

[* This connects itself too with the fact that it is the expression of the unity of the body — truth specially committed to the apostle. On the other hand, he was not sent to baptise. That was mere admission to the house already formed, and to which the apostle had been admitted like others.]

[** The best MSS. omit "broken"; but it is the memorial of Christ slain, and His precious blood poured out.]

First, He links the affections with it in the strongest way. It was the same night on which Jesus was betrayed that He left this memorial of His sufferings and of His love. As the paschal lamb brought to mind the deliverance which the sacrifice offered in Egypt had procured for Israel, thus the Lord's supper called to mind the sacrifice of Christ. He is in the glory, the Spirit is given; but they were to remember Him. His offered body was the object before their hearts in this memorial. Take notice of this word "Remember." It is not a Christ as He now exists, it is not the realisation of what He is: that is not a remembrance — His body is now glorified. It is a remembrance of what He was on the cross. It is a body slain, and blood shed, not a glorified body. It is remembered, though, by those who are now united to Him in the glory into which He is entered. As risen and associated with Him in glory, they look back to that blessed work of love, and His love in it which gave them a place there. They drink

also of the cup in remembrance of Him. In a word, it is Christ looked at as dead: there is not such a Christ now.

It is the remembrance of Christ Himself. It is that which attaches to Himself, it is not only the value of His sacrifice, but attachment to Himself, the remembrance of Himself. The apostle then shows us, if it is a dead Christ, who it is that died. Impossible to find two words, the bringing together of which has so important a meaning, The death of the Lord. How many things are comprised in that He who is called the Lord had died! What love! what purposes! what efficacy! what results! The Lord Himself gave Himself up for us. We celebrate His death. At the same time, it is the end of God's relations with the world on the ground of man's responsibility, except the judgment. This death has broken every link — has proved the impossibility of any. We show forth this death until the rejected Lord shall return, to establish new bonds of association by receiving us to Himself to have part in them. It is this which we proclaim in the ordinance when we keep it. Besides this, it is in itself a declaration that the blood on which the new covenant is founded has been already shed; it was established in this blood. I do not go beyond that which the passage presents; the object of the Spirit of God here, is to set before us, not the efficacy of the death of Christ, but that which attaches the heart to Him in remembering His death, and the meaning of the ordinance itself. It is a dead, betrayed Christ whom we remember. The offered body was, as it were, before their eyes at this supper. The shed blood of the Savior claimed the affections of their heart for Him. They were guilty of despising these precious things, if they took part in the supper unworthily. The Lord Himself fixed our thoughts there in this ordinance, and in the most affecting way, at the very moment of His betrayal.

But if Christ attracted the heart thus to fix its attention there, discipline was also solemnly exercised in connection with this ordinance. If they despised the broken body and the blood of the Lord by taking part in it lightly, chastisement was inflicted. Many had become sick and weak, and many had fallen asleep, that is, had died. It is not the being worthy to partake that is spoken of, but the partaking in an unworthy manner. Every Christian, unless some sin had excluded him, was worthy to partake because he was a Christian. But a Christian might come to it without judging himself, or appreciating as he ought that which the supper brought

to his mind, and which Christ had connected with it. He did not discern the Lord's body; and he did not discern, did not judge, the evil in himself. God cannot leave us thus careless. If the believer judges himself, the Lord will not judge him; if we do not judge ourselves, the Lord judges; but when the Christian is judged, he is chastened of the Lord that he may not be condemned with the world. It is the government of God in the hands of the Lord who judges His own house: an important and too much forgotten truth. No doubt the result of all is according to the counsels of God, who displays in it all His wisdom, His patience, and the righteousness of His ways; but this government is real. He desires the good of His people in the end; but He will have holiness, a heart whose condition answers to that which He has revealed (and He has revealed Himself), a walk which is its expression. The normal state of a Christian is communion, according to the power of that which has been revealed. Is there failure in this — communion is lost, and with it the power to glorify God, a power found nowhere else. But if one judges oneself, there is restoration: the heart being cleansed from the evil by judging it, communion is restored. If one does not judge oneself, God must interpose and correct and cleanse us by discipline — discipline which may even be unto death (see Job 33, 36; 1 John 5:16; James 5:14, 15).

There are yet one or two remarks to be made. To “judge” oneself, is not the same word as to be “judged” of the Lord. It is the same that is used in chapter 11:29, “discerning the Lord's body.” Thus, what we have to do is not only to judge an evil committed, it is to discern one's condition, as it is manifested in the light — even as God Himself is in the light — by walking in it. This prevents our falling into evil either in act or thought. But if we have fallen, it is not enough to judge the action; it is ourselves we must judge, and the state of heart, the tendency, the neglect, which occasioned our falling into the evil — in a word, that which is not communion with God or that which hinders it. It was thus the Lord dealt with Peter. He did not reproach him for his fault, He judged its root.

Moreover the assembly ought to have power to discern these things. God acts in this way, as we have seen in Job; but the saints have the mind of Christ by the Spirit of Christ, and ought to discern their own condition.

The foundation and center of all this, is the position in which we stand towards Christ in the Lord's supper, as the visible center of communion and the expression of His death; in which sin, all sin, is judged. Now we are in connection with this holy judgment of sin as our portion. We cannot mingle the death of Christ with sin. It is, as to its nature and efficacy, of which the full result will in the end be manifested, the total putting away of sin. It is the divine negation of sin. He died to sin, and that in love to us. It is the absolute holiness of God made sensible and expressed to us in that which took place with regard to sin. It is absolute devotedness to God for His glory in this respect. To bring sin or carelessness into it, is to profane the death of Christ, who died rather than allow sin to subsist before God. We cannot be condemned with the world, because He has died and has put away sin for us; but to bring sin to that which represents this very death in which He suffered for sin is a thing which cannot be born. God vindicates that which is due to the holiness and the love of a Christ who gave up His life to put away sin. One cannot say, I will not go to the table; that is, I will accept the sin and give up the confession of the value of that death. We examine ourselves, and we go; we re-establish the rights of His death in our conscience — for all is pardoned and expiated as to guilt, and we go to acknowledge these rights as the proof of infinite grace.

The world is condemned. Sin in the Christian is judged, it escapes neither the eye nor the judgment of God. He never permits it; He cleanses the believer from it by chastening him, although He does not condemn, because Christ has born his sins, and been made sin for him. The death of Christ forms then the center of communion in the assembly, and the touchstone of conscience, and that, with respect to the assembly, in the Lord's supper.

The other branch of the truth, in reference to the assembly of God in general and to the assemblies, is the presence and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. These, as well as the Lord's supper, are in connection with unity;* the individual being responsible in each. It is the subject of spiritual manifestations which the apostle takes up in chapter 12. The first point was to establish the distinctive marks of the Spirit of God. There were evil spirits, who sought to creep in among the Christians, and to speak or act pretending to be the Spirit of God, and thus to confound everything. Christians of the present day hardly believe in such efforts of the enemy

as these. Spiritual manifestations are, no doubt, less striking now than at the time of which the apostle speaks; but the enemy adapts his means of deception to the circumstances in which man and the work of God are found. As Peter says in a similar case, “As there were false prophets among the people, so shall there be false teachers among you.” The enemy does not cease to act. “Forbidding to marry,” etc., was the doctrine of devils. In the last days his power will be manifested still more. God can restrain him by the energy of His Spirit, and by the power of the truth; but if he is not bridled, he still acts, deceiving men, and that by such things as one would suppose it impossible (if not deceived oneself) that a man of sober sense could believe. But it is surprising what a man can believe when he is left to himself, without being kept by God, when the power of the enemy is there. We talk of common sense, of reason (very precious they are); but history tells us that God alone gives them or preserves them to us.

[* We have seen this with regard to the supper, in chapter 10:17. Here, chapter 12:13, we see it with regard to the Holy Ghost.]

Here the Spirit of God manifested Himself by the effects of His power, which broke forth in the midst of the assembly, attracting the attention even of the world. The enemy imitated them. The greater part of the Christians at Corinth having been poor Gentiles, without discernment, and stupidly led by the delusions of the enemy, they were the more in danger of being again deceived by this means. When a man is not filled with the Spirit of God, who gives force to the truth in his heart, and clearness to his moral vision, the seductive power of the enemy dazzles his imagination. He loves the marvelous, unbelieving as he may be with regard to the truth. He lacks holy discernment, because he is ignorant of the holiness and character of God, and has not the stability of a soul that possesses the knowledge of God (God Himself, we may say) as his treasure — of a soul which knows that it has all in Him, so that it needs no other marvels. If a man is not thus established by the knowledge of God, the power of the enemy strikes him — pre-occupies him; he cannot shake it off, he cannot account for it. He is a victim to the influence which this power exercises over his mind; the flesh is pleased with it, for in one shape or another the result is always liberty to the flesh.

Long led blindly by the power of evil spirits, the converted Gentiles were hardly in a state to discern and judge them. Strange to say, this demoniac power exercised such an influence that they forgot the importance even of the name of Jesus, or at least forgot that His name was not acknowledged by it. The enemy transforms himself into an angel of light, but he never really owns Jesus Christ as Lord. He will speak of Paul and Silvanus, and would have his part with Christians, but Christ is not acknowledged; and at last it is the breaking up and ruin of those who follow him. An unclean spirit would not say Lord Jesus, and the Spirit of God could not say Anathema to Jesus. But it is a question here of spirits, and not of conversion, nor of the necessity of grace working in the heart for the true confession of the name of Jesus — a very true thing, as we know, but not the subject here.

We come now to positive instructions. Nothing more important, more distinctive, more marvelous, than the presence of the Holy Ghost here below in the midst of Christians; the fruit to us, of the perfect work of Christ, but in itself the manifestation of the presence of God among men on the earth. The providence of God manifests His power in the works of creation, and His government which directs all things; but the Holy Ghost is His presence in this world, the testimony that He bears of Himself, of His character.* He is among men to display Himself, not yet in glory, but in power and in testimony of what He is. Christ having accomplished redemption, and having presented the efficacy of His work to God, Sovereign and Judge, the assembly, being ransomed and cleansed by His blood, and united to Him as His body, became also the vessel of this power which acts in His members. Thus she ought to display this power in holiness — he is responsible to do so. But in this way, as to its exercise, man becomes in fact individually the vessel of this spiritual energy. It is a treasure committed to him. Now the Spirit is, in the first place, the link between the assembly and Christ, as well as between the Christian and Christ. It is by the Spirit that communion is realised and maintained, it is the primary function of the Spirit; and man must be in communion in order to realise the character and discern the will of God, and that, according to the testimony intended to be born by the Spirit come down to earth.

[* It is a very striking truth that God's dwelling with men is the fruit of redemption. He did not dwell with Adam innocent; He could walk in the garden, but did not dwell there. He did not dwell with Abraham.]

But if the assembly does not maintain this communion, she loses her strength as the responsible witness of God on earth, and in fact her joy and her spiritual intelligence also. God is ever sovereign to act as He chooses, and Christ cannot fail in His faithfulness to His body; but the testimony committed to the assembly is no longer so rendered as to make it felt that God is present on the earth. The assembly is not, perhaps, aware of the estrangement, because she retains for a time much of that which God has given, which is far beyond all that was according to nature; and in losing strength she has also lost the discernment of what she ought to be. But God is never mistaken as to the assembly's condition — "Thou hast left thy first love." "Except thou repent," says He, "and do the first works, I will take away thy candlestick —" a solemn consideration for the assembly, as to her responsibility, when we reflect on the grace that has been shown her, on the fruits that have been — and those that ought to have been — manifested, and on the power given her to produce them.

The purposes of God for the assembly have their end and aim in heaven. They will be accomplished without the possibility of the least thing failing. All that is needful to bring her members there according to His counsels, Christ will do. They are redeemed by His blood to be His.

The ways of God are accomplished and unfolded on the earth for our instruction, both in the assembly and in individuals.

It is not only in His gifts that the presence of the Spirit of God is manifested. There are prophecies and miracles, men moved by the Holy Ghost, before the day of Pentecost. That which is attributed to faith in Hebrews 11 is often ascribed to the Spirit in the Old Testament. But the Spirit was promised in a special way in the Old Testament. He was never at that period the presence of God in the midst of the people, as He dwelt in the assembly. The glory came to take possession of the tabernacle or temple. His Spirit acted in sovereignty outside the order of His house, and could be with them when that glory was gone. But the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven to dwell in the disciples and in the assembly on earth, was the manifestation of the presence of God in His house, of God who was there by the Spirit. And this presence of the Spirit is so distinct, and

so plainly noted as a thing known and realised by the first Christians, which demonstrated instead of being demonstrated, that it is spoken of in the word as being the Holy Ghost Himself. In John 7 it is said, "The Holy Ghost was not yet." In Acts 19 the twelve men say to Paul, "We have not so much as heard whether the Holy Ghost is." It was not a question whether there was a Holy Ghost (every orthodox Jew believed it), but whether this presence of the Holy Ghost Himself dwelling here below, the new Comforter and Guide of the disciples, of which John the Baptist had spoken, had yet taken place. When come down, it was the presence of God in His spiritual temple on earth. The place in which the disciples were gathered together was shaken to show that God was there. Ananias and Sapphira fell down dead before the apostles for having lied to God. Philip is caught away by His power from the presence of the man who had received the knowledge of Jesus by his means.

Such was the presence of the Holy Ghost. In our chapter, the apostle speaks of the manifestations of His presence in the gifts which were exercised by the instrumentality of members of the body, whether for the calling out and edification of the assembly, or in testimony to those outside. Before entering on this subject, he gives the Corinthians — whom the enemy would have deeply deceived — that which would enable them to distinguish between the manifestation of the Holy Ghost and the actings of an evil spirit. He then speaks of gifts.

Now there were not divers spirits, as in the case of demons; there was only one and the same Spirit, but diversity of gifts. This gives occasion to bring in the different relationship (for he speaks of the order of the relations of man with God — the practical energy of which is in the Holy Ghost) in which men, moved by the Holy Ghost, are placed with regard to God and to Christ. The Spirit, one and the same Spirit, acts in them by various manifestations. But in the exercise of these different gifts they were administrators, and there was one Lord, that is, Christ. It was not therefore in them an independent and voluntary power: whatever might be the energy of the Spirit in them, they did not cease to be servants and stewards of Christ, and they were to act in this character, acknowledging in their service the Lordship of Christ. Nevertheless, although it was power in a man, and that it was man who acted, so that he was a servant (and a Man who was Head and who was served, although He was Son of God

and Lord of all), yet it was God who wrought, one and the same God who wrought all in all. It is not the Trinity, properly speaking, that is presented here in its own character, but one only Spirit acting in Christians, Jesus Lord, and God acting in the gifts.

The gifts are manifestations of the energy of the Spirit thus committed to men, under Christ who is Head and Lord; men were to use them as serving the Lord. Now Christ thought of what was profitable to His people, to those that were His; and the manifestation of the Spirit was given for the profit of souls, of the assembly in general. The apostle notices several of these gifts; but he reminds us again that it is the same Spirit who works in each case, distributing to every one according to His own will. Let the reader remark this passage. The apostle had said that God wrought all these things, and had spoken of the gifts as being manifestations of the Spirit. It might have been supposed that the Spirit was some vague influence, and that one must attribute everything to God without recognising a personal Spirit. But these operations, which were attributed to God in verse 6, are here attributed to the Spirit; and it is added, that He, the Spirit, distributes to each as He will. It is not therefore an inferior Spirit. Where He works, it is God who works; but these operations in men are gifts distributed according to the will of the Spirit, the Spirit being thus presented as acting personally in this distribution and according to His will.

Some of the gifts may require a short observation. Wisdom is the application of divine light to right and wrong, and to all the circumstances through which we pass — an expression which has a wide extent, because it applies to everything with regard to which we have to form a judgment. The Holy Ghost furnishes some in a peculiar way with this wisdom, with a wisdom according to God — a perception of the true nature of things, and of their relationship to each other, and of conduct with regard to both, which, coming from God, guides us through the difficulties of the way, and enables us to avoid that which would place us in a false position towards God and man.

Knowledge is intelligence in the mind of God as it is revealed to us. Faith is not here simple faith in the gospel; that is not a distinctive gift which one believer may possess and another not. This is evident. It is the faith, the

energy, given by God, which overcomes difficulties, which rises above dangers, which confronts them without being alarmed by them. The discerning of spirits is not that of a man's condition of soul — it has nothing to do with it. It is the knowing how to discern, by the mighty energy of the Spirit of God, the actings of evil spirits, and to bring them to light if necessary, in contrast with the action of the Spirit of God.

The other gifts require no comment. We must now return to the unity of the Spirit, with which is connected that which the apostle says after having spoken of the gifts. The Spirit was one, he had said, working diversely in the members according to His will. The importance of His personality, and the immense import of His divinity (if we reflect that it is He who works in and by man) is very evident when we observe that He is the center and the living power of the unity of the whole body, so that the individuals, in the exercise of their gifts, are but the members of the one and the same body divinely formed by the power and the presence of the Spirit. This point the apostle develops largely, in connection with the oneness of the body, the mutual dependence of the members, and the relationship of each one to the body as a whole.

The practical instructions are easily understood, but there are some important points in the general principles. The oneness of the body is produced by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and the connection of the members depends upon it. By one Spirit we have all been baptised to be one body. The Lord's supper is the expression of this oneness; the Spirit is He who produces it, and who is its strength. The distinctive character of Jew and Gentile — and all other distinctions — was lost in the power of one Spirit common to all, who united them all as redeemed ones in one only body. The apostle in this verse (13) speaks of the baptism of the Holy Ghost; but the word suggests to him the supper, the second ordinance of the Lord, and he speaks of drinking into one spirit, alluding, I doubt not, to the Lord's supper. He does not speak of the Holy Ghost: one spirit was the state of the believers, the word being used in contrast with one body, associated in one heart and mind by the Spirit — participating in Christ.

It is not faith which is union, nor even life, though both are the portion of those united, but the Holy Ghost. The baptism of the Holy Ghost, then, is

that which forms Christians into one only body, and they are all made partakers of, are animated individually by, one and the same Spirit. Thus there are many members, but one only body, and a body composed of these members, which are dependent the one on the other, and have need of each other. And even those gifts which were the most shining were comparatively of the least value, even as a man clothes and ornaments the least honorable parts of his body, and leaves the more beautiful parts uncovered.

Another point which the apostle marks, is the common interest that exists among them in that they are members of the one and the same body. If one suffers, all suffer, since there is but one body animated by one Spirit. If one is honored, all rejoice. This also depends on the one self-same Spirit who unites and animates them. Moreover this body is the body of Christ. "Ye are," says the apostle, "the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Observe, also, here that, although that assembly at Corinth was only a part of the body of Christ, the apostle speaks of the whole body; for the assembly there was, according to the principle of its gathering, the body of Christ as assembled at Corinth. It is true that at the beginning he speaks of all those who call on the name of the Lord Jesus; but in fact he addresses the Corinthian assembly. And the general expression shows that, in the walk of the assembly, and in its general interests, a local assembly cannot be separated from the whole body of Christians on earth; and the language employed here shows that, as to their position before God, the Christians of one town were considered as representing the whole assembly, as far as regarded that locality; not as independent of the rest, but, on the contrary, as inseparably united to the others, living and acting, with respect to that locality as members of the body of Christ, and looked upon as such in it, because every Christian formed a part of that body, and they formed a part of it likewise. From the verses that follow we see that the apostle, while looking upon the Christians there as the body of Christ, the members of which they were, has in his mind the whole assembly as the assembly of God. In the New Testament there is no other membership than that of Christ, except that they are members of each other, as forming the entire body, but never members of a church; the idea is different. The word speaks of the members of a body, like that of man as a figure, never

of the members of an assembly in the modern sense of the word. We are members of Christ, and consequently of the body of Christ; so were the Corinthians, as far as that body was manifested at Corinth.

Moreover the body of Christ, the assembly, is looked at here as a whole upon the earth. God has set in the assembly, apostles, prophets, etc.; miracles, healings, tongues. It is very plain that this is on the earth, as were the Corinthians, and that it is the assembly as a whole. Healings and tongues were not in heaven, and the apostles were not those of an individual assembly. In a word it was the Holy Ghost, come down from heaven, who had formed the unity of the body on earth, and who acted in it by the especial gifts which distinguished the members.

The apostle then points out these gifts, not to give a formal and complete list of them, but to mark the order and importance of those he mentions. Tongues, of which the Corinthians were so proud, are the last gifts named in the list. Some gifts then, were more excellent than others; they were to be estimated according to the measure in which they served for the edification of the assembly. Those which served this end were to be desired.

It is interesting to remark here the difference of this chapter and Ephesians 4. Here it is simply power, and men are told in certain cases to be silent, when the power was there; it was the Holy Ghost working as power. In Ephesians 4 it is Christ's care as Head of the body. No gifts which are signs of power to others are mentioned; only what founds the assembly, edifies the saints, and builds the assembly up; and then there is promise of continuance till we all come. For Christ cannot cease to care for His body; but sign-gifts may disappear, and they have. Apostles and prophets were the foundation, and in that sense they were, when the foundation was laid, no longer in exercise.

Nevertheless there was something more excellent than all gifts. They were the manifestations of the power of God and of the mysteries of His wisdom; love, that of His nature itself.

They might speak with all tongues; they might have prophecy, the knowledge of mysteries, the faith which can remove mountains; they might give all their possessions to feed the poor, and their bodies to be tortured:

if they had not love, it was nothing. Love was conformity to the nature of God, the living expression of what He was, the manifestation of having been made partakers of His nature: it was the acting and feeling according to His likeness. This love is developed in reference to others; but others are not the motive, although they are the object. It has its source within; its strength is independent of the objects with which it is occupied. Thus it can act where circumstances might produce irritation or jealousy in the human heart. It acts according to its own nature in the circumstances; and by judging them according to that nature, they do not act upon the man who is full of love, except so far as they supply occasion for its activity, and direct its form. Love is its own motive. In us participation in the divine nature is its only source. Communion with God Himself alone sustains it through all the difficulties it has to surmount in its path. This love is the opposite of selfishness and of self-seeking, and shuts it out, seeking the good of others, even (as to its principle) as God has sought us in grace (see Ephesians 4:32; 5:1, 2). What a power to avoid evil in oneself, to forget all in order to do good!

It is worthy of note that the qualities of divine love are almost entirely of a passive character.

The first eight qualities pointed out by the Spirit are the expression of this renunciation of self. The three that follow, mark that joy in good which sets the heart free also from that readiness to suppose evil, which is so natural to human nature, on account of its own depth of evil, and that which it also experiences in the world. The last four show its positive energy, which — the source of every kind thought — by the powerful spring of its divine nature, presumes good when it does not see it, and bears with evil when it sees it, covering it by long — suffering and patience; not bringing it to light, but burying it in its own depth — a depth which is unfathomable, because love never changes. One finds nothing but love where it is real; for circumstances are but an occasion for it to act and show itself. Love is always itself, and it is love which is exercised and displayed. It is that which fills the mind: everything else is but a means of awakening the soul that dwells in love to its exercise. This is the divine character. No doubt the time of judgment will come; but our relationships with God are in grace. Love is His nature. It is now the time of its exercise. We represent Him on earth in testimony.

In that which is said of love in this chapter we find the reproduction of the divine nature, except that what is said is but the negative of the selfishness of the flesh in us. Now the divine nature changes not and never ceases; love therefore abides ever. Communications from God; the means by which they are made; knowledge, as attained here below, according to which we apprehend the truth in part only, although the whole truth is revealed to us (for we apprehend it in detail, so that we have never the whole at once, the character of our knowledge being to lay hold of different truths singly); all that is characterised by being in part — passes away. Love will not pass away. A child learns; he rejoices too in things that amuse him; when he becomes a man, he requires things in accordance with his intelligence as a man. It was thus with tongues and the edification of the assembly. The time however was coming when they should know even as they were known, not by communications of truths to a capacity that apprehended the truth in its different parts, but they should understand it as a whole in its unity.

Now love subsists already; there are faith and hope also. Not only shall these pass away, but even now, here below, that which is of the nature of God is more excellent than that which is connected with the capacity of human nature, even though enlightened by God, and having for its object the revealed glory of God.

Believers therefore were to follow after and seek for love, while desiring gifts, especially that they might prophesy, because thus they would edify the assembly, and that was the thing to aim at; it was that which love desired and sought, it was that which intelligence required, the two marks of a man in Christ, of one to whom Christ is all.

Two verses in this chapter 14 demand a little attention — the 3rd and the 6th. Verse 3 is the effect, or rather the quality, of that which a prophet says, and not a definition. He edifies, he encourages, he comforts, by speaking. Nevertheless these words show the character of what he said. Prophecy is in no wise simply the revelation of future events, although prophets as such have revealed them. A prophet is one who is so in communication with God as to be able to communicate His mind. A teacher instructs according to that which is already written, and so explains its import. But, in communicating the mind of God to souls under grace,

the prophet encouraged and edified them. With regard to verse 6, it is plain that coming with tongues (by the use of which the Corinthians like children, loved to shine in the assembly) he that so spoke, edified no one, for he was not understood. Perhaps he did not understand himself, but was the unintelligent instrument of the Spirit, whilst having the powerful impression of the fact that God spoke by his means, so that in the Spirit he felt that he was in communication with God, although his understanding was unfruitful. In any case no one could speak for the edification of the assembly unless he communicated the mind of God.

Of such communication the apostle distinguishes two kinds — revelation and knowledge. The latter supposes a revelation already given, of which some one availed himself by the Holy Ghost for the good of the flock. He then points out the gifts which were respectively the means of edifying in these two ways. It is not that the two latter terms (v. 6) are the equivalents of the two former; but the two things here spoken of as edifying the church were accomplished by means of these two gifts. There might be “prophecy” without its being absolutely a new revelation, although there was more in it than knowledge. It might contain an application of the thoughts of God, an address on the part of God to the soul, to the conscience, which would be more than knowledge, but which would not be a new revelation. God acts therein without revealing a new truth, or a new fact. “Knowledge,” or “doctrine,” teaches truths, or explains the word, a thing very useful to the assembly; but in it there is not the direct action of the Spirit in application, and thus not the direct manifestation of the presence of God to men in their own conscience and heart. When any one teaches, he who is spiritual profits by it; when one prophesies, even he who is not spiritual may feel it, he is reached and judged; and it is the same thing with the Christian’s conscience. Revelation, or knowledge, is a perfect division and embraces everything. Prophecy, and doctrine, are in intimate connection with the two; but prophecy embraces other ideas, so that this division does not exactly answer to the first two terms.

The apostle insists largely on the necessity for making oneself understood, whether one speaks, or sings, or prays. He desires — and the remark is of all importance in judging men’s pretensions to the Spirit — that the understanding be in exercise. He does not deny that they might speak with

tongues without the understanding being at all in it — a thing of evident power and utility when persons were present who understood no other language, or whose natural language it was. But, in general, it was an inferior thing when the Spirit did not act upon, and therefore by means of, the understanding in him who spoke. Communion between souls in a common subject, through the unity of the Spirit, did not exist when he who spoke did not understand what he said. The individual speaking did not himself enjoy, as from God, what he communicated to others. If others did not understand it either, it was child's play to utter words without meaning to the hearers. But the apostle desired to understand himself that which he said, although he spoke in many tongues; so that it was not jealousy on his part. He spoke more foreign tongues, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, than they all. But his soul loved the things of God — loved to receive truth intelligently from Him — loved to hold intelligent intercourse with others; and he would rather say five words with his understanding, than ten thousand without it in an unknown tongue.

What a marvelous power, what a manifestation of the presence of God — a thing worthy of the deepest attention — and, at the same time, what superiority to all carnal vanity, to the lustre reflected upon the individual by means of gifts — what moral power of the Spirit of God, where love saw nothing in these manifestations of power in gift but instruments to be used for the good of the assembly and of souls! It was the practical force of that love, to the exercise of which, as being superior to gifts, he exhorted the faithful. It was the love and the wisdom of God directing the exercise of His power for the good of those whom He loved. What a position for a man! What simplicity is imparted by the grace of God to one who forgets self in humility and love, and what power in that humility! The apostle confirms his argument by the effect that would be produced on strangers who might come into the assembly, or on unenlightened Christians, if they heard languages spoken which no one understood: they would think them mad. Prophecy, reaching their conscience, would make them feel that God was there — was present in the assembly of God.

Gifts were abundant in Corinth. Having regulated that which concerned moral questions, the apostle in the second place regulates the exercise of those gifts. Every one came with some manifestation of the power of the Holy Ghost, of which they evidently thought more than of conformity to

Christ. Nevertheless the apostle acknowledges in it the power of the Spirit of God, and gives rules for its exercise. Two or three might speak with tongues, provided there was an interpreter, so that the assembly might be edified. And this was to be done one at a time, for it appears they even spoke several at once. In the same way as to the prophets: two or three might speak, the others would judge if it really came from God. For, if it were given to them of God, all might prophesy; but only one at a time, that all might learn — a dependence always good for the most gifted prophets — and that all might be comforted. The spirits of the prophets (that is to say, the impulse of the power in the exercise of gifts) were subject to the guidance of the moral intelligence which the Spirit bestowed on the prophets. They were, on God's part, masters of themselves in the use of these gifts, in the exercise of this marvelous power which wrought in them. It was not a divine fury, as the pagans said of their diabolical inspiration, which carried them away; for God could not be the author of confusion in the assembly, but of peace. In a word we see that this power was committed to man in his moral responsibility; an important principle, which is invariable in the ways of God. God saved man by grace, when he had failed in his responsibility; but all that He has committed to man, whatever may be the divine energy of the gift, man holds as responsible to use it for the glory of God, and consequently for the good of others and especially for the assembly.

Women were to be silent in the assembly: it was not permitted to them to speak. They were to remain in obedience and not to direct others. The law moreover held the same language. It would be a shame to hear them speak in public. If they had had questions to ask, they might inquire of their husbands at home.

With all their gifts, the word did not come out from the Corinthians, nor had it come unto them only; they ought to submit to the universal order of the Spirit in the assembly. If they pretended to be led by the Spirit, let them acknowledge (and this would prove it,) that the things which the apostle wrote to them were the commandments of the Lord: a very important assertion; a responsible and serious position of this wonderful servant of God.

What a mixture of tenderness, of patience, and of authority! The apostle desires that the faithful should come to the truth and to order, conducted by their own affections; not fearing, if necessary for their good, to avail himself of an authority without appeal, as speaking directly from God — an authority which God would justify if the apostle was forced unwillingly to use it. If any were ignorant that he wrote by the Spirit with the authority of God, it was ignorance indeed; let such be given up to their ignorance. Spiritual and simple men would be delivered from such pretensions. Those who were really filled with the Spirit would acknowledge that what the apostle wrote came immediately from God, and was the expression of His wisdom, of that which became Him: for often there may be the recognition of divine or even human wisdom when it is found, where there was not the ability to find it, nor, if it were perceived in part, the power to set it forth with authority. Meanwhile the man of pretension, reduced to this place, would find the place profitable, and that which he needed.

We shall also observe here the importance of this assertion of the apostle's with regard to the inspiration of the epistles. That which he taught for the details even of the order of the assembly, was so really given of God, came so entirely from God, that they were the commandments of the Lord. For doctrine we have, at the end of the Epistle to the Romans, the same declaration that it was by means of prophetic writings that the gospel was disseminated among the nations.

The apostle resumes his instructions by saying, that they should desire to prophesy, not forbid to speak with tongues, and that all should be done with order and propriety.

But other evils had found means to introduce themselves into the midst of the shining gifts which were exercised in the bosom of the flock at Corinth. The resurrection of the dead was denied. Satan is wily in his dealings. Apparently it was only the body that was in question; nevertheless the whole gospel was at stake, for if the dead rose not, then Christ was not risen. And if Christ was not risen, the sins of the faithful were not put away, and the gospel was not true. The apostle therefore reserved this question for the end of his epistle, and he enters into it thoroughly.

First, he reminds them of that which he had preached among them as the gospel, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, and was raised again according to the scriptures. This then was the means of their salvation, if they continued in it, unless they had believed in vain. Here at least was a very solid foundation for his argument: their salvation (unless all that they had believed was but a profitless fable) depended on the fact of the resurrection, and was bound up with it. But if the dead rose not, Christ was not risen, for He had died. The apostle begins therefore by establishing this fact through the most complete and positive testimonies, including his own testimony, since he had himself seen the Lord. Five hundred persons had seen Him at once, the greater part of whom were still alive to bear witness of it.

Observe, in passing, that the apostle can speak of nothing without a moral effect being produced in his heart, because he thinks of it with God. Thus, verses 8-10, he calls to mind the state of things with regard to himself and to the other apostles, and that which grace had done; and then, his heart unburdened, he returns to his subject. The testimony of every divine witness was the same. Everything declared that Christ was risen; everything depended on the fact that He was so. This was his starting-point. If, said he, that which was preached among you is that Christ was raised from the dead, how happens it that some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is none, Christ is not risen; if He is not risen, the preaching of His witnesses is vain, the faith of Christians vain. Nor that only; but these witnesses are false witnesses, for they had declared, with respect to God, that He had raised up Christ from the dead. But God had not raised Him up if the dead do not rise. And in that case their faith was vain: they were yet in their sins; and those who had already fallen asleep in Christ had perished. Now, if it be in this life only that the believer has hope in Christ, he is of all men the most miserable; he does but suffer as to this world. But it is not so, for Christ is risen.

Here, however, it is not only a general doctrine that the dead are raised. Christ, in rising, came up from among the dead. It is the favor and the power of God come in,* to bring back from among the dead the One who had in His grace gone down into death to accomplish and to display the deliverance of man in Christ from the power of Satan and of death; and to

put a public seal on the work of redemption, to exhibit openly in man the victory over all the power of the enemy. Thus Christ arose from among all the other dead (for death could not hold Him), and established the glorious principle of this divine and complete deliverance, and He became the first-fruits of them that slept, who, having His life, await the exercise of His power, which will awaken them by virtue of the Spirit that dwells in them.

[* Christ could say, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” for He who dwells in the temple is God. It is also said that He was raised up by the Spirit, and at the same time by the glory of the Father. But here He is viewed as man who has undergone death; and God intervenes, that He may not remain in it, because here the object is, not to show forth the glory of the Lord’s Person, but to prove our resurrection, since He, a dead man, has been raised. By man came death; by man, resurrection. While demonstrating that He was the Lord from heaven, the apostle always speaks here of the Man Christ.]

This evidently gives a very peculiar character to the resurrection. It is not only that the dead rise, but that God, by His power, brings back certain persons from among the dead, on account of the favor which He has for them, and in connection with the life and the Spirit which are in them. Christ has a quite peculiar place. Life was in Him, and He is our life. He gained this victory by which we profit. He is of right the first-fruits. It was due to His glory. Had He not gained the victory, we should always have remained in prison. He had power Himself to resume life, but the great principle is the same, it is not only a resurrection of the dead, but those who are alive according to God arise as the objects of His favor, and by the exercise of that power which wills to have them for Himself and with Himself — Christ, the first-fruits: those who are Christ’s, at His coming. We are associated with Christ in resurrection. We come out like Him, not only from death, but from the dead. We mark, too, here how Christ and His people are inseparably identified. If they do not rise, He is not risen. He was as really dead as we can be, has taken in grace our place under death, was a man as we are men (save sin) so truly that, if you deny this result for us, you deny the fact as to Him; and the object and foundation of faith itself fails. This identification of Christ with men, so as to be able to draw a conclusion from us to Him, is full of power and blessing. If the dead do not rise, He is not risen; He was as truly dead as we can be.

It needed to be by man. No doubt the power of God can call men back from the tomb. He will do so, acting in the Person of His Son, to whom all judgment is given. But that will not be a victory gained in human nature over death which held men captive. This it is which Christ has done. He was willing to be given up to death for us, in order (as man) to gain the victory for us over death and over him who had the power of death. By man came death; by man, resurrection. Glorious victory! complete triumph! We come out of the state where sin and its consequences fully reached us. Evil cannot enter the place into which we are brought out. We have crossed the frontiers for ever. Sin, the power of the enemy, remains outside this new creation, which is the fruit of the power of God after evil had come in, and which the responsibility of man shall not mar. It is God who maintains it in connection with Himself: it depends on Him.

There are two great principles established here: by man, death; by man, the resurrection of the dead; Adam and Christ as heads of two families. In Adam all die; in Christ all shall be made alive. But here there is an all-important development in connection with the position of Christ in the counsels of God. One side of this truth is the dependence of the family, so to call it, upon its head. Adam brought death into the midst of his descendants — those who are in relation with himself. This is the principle which characterises the history of the first Adam. Christ, in whom is life, brings life into the midst of those who are His — communicates it to them. This principle characterises the second Adam, and those who are His in Him. But it is life in the power of resurrection, without which it could not have been communicated to them. The grain of wheat would have been perfect in itself, but would have remained alone. But He died for their sins, and now He imparts life to them, all their sins being forgiven them.

Now, in the resurrection, there is an order according to the wisdom of God for the accomplishment of His counsels — Christ, the first-fruits; those who are Christ's, at His coming again. Thus those who are in Christ are quickened according to the power of the life which is in Christ; it is the resurrection of life. But this is not the whole extent of resurrection as acquired by Christ, in gaining the victory over death according to the Spirit of holiness. The Father has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him. The latter are those of whom this chapter treats essentially, because its subject is

resurrection among Christians; and the apostle, the Spirit Himself, loves to speak on the subject of the power of eternal life in Christ. Yet he cannot entirely omit the other part of the truth. The resurrection of the dead, he tells us, is come by man. But he is not here speaking of the communication of life in Christ. In connection with this last and nearer part of his subject, he does not touch upon the resurrection of the wicked; but after the coming of Christ he introduces the end, when He shall have given up the kingdom to the Father. With the kingdom is introduced the power of Christ exercised over all things — a different thought entirely from the communication of life to His own.

There are three steps therefore in these events: first, the resurrection of Christ; then, the resurrection of those who are His, at His coming; afterwards, the end, when He shall have given up the kingdom to the Father. The first and the second are the accomplishment in resurrection of the power of life in Christ and in His people. When He comes, He takes the kingdom; He takes His great power and acts as king. From His coming then to the end is the development of His power, in order to subdue all things to Himself; during which all power and all authority shall be abolished. For He must reign till all His enemies are under His feet; the last subdued will be death. Here then, as the effect of His power only, and not in connection with the communication of life, we find the resurrection of those who are not His; for the destruction of death is their resurrection. They are passed over in silence: only that death, such as we see it, has no longer dominion over them. Christ has the right and the power, in virtue of His resurrection and of His having glorified the Father, to destroy the dominion of death over them, and to raise them up again. This will be the resurrection of judgment. Its effect is declared elsewhere.

When He has put all His enemies under His feet, and has given back the kingdom to His Father (for it is never taken from Him, nor given to another, as happens with human kingdoms), then the Son Himself is subject to Him who has put all things under Him, in order that God may be all in all. The reader should observe, that it is the counsels of God with regard to the government of all things which is here spoken of, and not His nature; and moreover it is the Son, as man, of whom these things are said. This is not an arbitrary explanation: the passage is from Psalm 8, the subject of which is the exaltation of man to the position of head of all

things, God putting all things under His feet. Nothing, says the apostle, is excepted (Hebrews 2:8) save, as he adds here, that He is necessarily excepted who put all things under Him. When the man Christ, the Son of God, has in fact accomplished this subjugation, He gives back to God the universal power which had been committed to Him, and the mediatorial kingdom, which He held as man, ceases. He is again subject, as He was on earth. He does not cease to be one with the Father, even as He was so while living in humiliation on the earth, although saying at the same time “Before Abraham was, I am.” But the mediatorial government of man has disappeared — is absorbed in the supremacy of God, to which there is no longer any opposition. Christ will take His eternal place, a Man, the Head of the whole redeemed family, being at the same time God blessed for ever, one with the Father. In Psalm 2 we see the Son of God, as born on earth, King in Zion, rejected when He presented Himself on earth; in Psalm 8 the result of His rejection, exalted as Son of man at the head of all that the hand of God has made. Then we find Him here laying down this conferred authority, and resuming the normal position of humanity, namely, that of subjection to Him who has put all things under Him; but through it all, never changing His divine nature, nor — save so far as exchanging humiliation for glory — His human nature either. But God is now all in all, and the special government of man in the Person of Jesus — a government with which the assembly is associated (see Ephesians 1:20-23, which is a quotation from the same Psalm) is merged in the immutable supremacy of God, the final and normal relationship of God with His creature. We shall find the Lamb omitted in that which is said in Revelation 21:1-8, speaking of this same period.

Thus we find in this passage resurrection by man — death having entered by man; the relationship of the saints with Jesus, the source and the power of life, the consequence being His resurrection, and theirs at His coming; power over all things committed to Christ, the risen Man; afterwards the kingdom given back to God the Father, the tabernacle of God with men, and the man Christ, the second Adam, eternally a man subject to the Supreme — this last a truth of infinite value to us (the resurrection of the wicked, though supposed in the resurrection brought in by Christ, not being the direct subject of the chapter). The reader must now remark that this passage is a revelation, in which the Spirit of God, having fixed the

apostle's thoughts upon Jesus and the resurrection, suddenly interrupts the line of his argument, announcing — with that impulse which the thought of Christ always gave to the mind and heart of the apostle — all the ways of God in Christ with regard to the resurrection, to the connection of those that are His with Him in that resurrection, and the government and dominion which belong to Him as risen, as well as the eternal nature of His relationship, as man, to God. Having communicated these thoughts of God, which were revealed to him, he resumes the thread of his argument in verse 29. This part ends with verse 34, after which he treats the question, which they had brought forward as a difficulty — in what manner should the dead be raised?

By taking the verses 20-28 (which contain so important a revelation in a passage that is complete in itself) as a parenthesis, the verses 29-34 become much more intelligible, and some expressions, which have greatly harassed interpreters, have a tolerably determined sense. The apostle had said, in verse 16, "If the dead rise not," and then, that if such were the case, those who had fallen asleep in Jesus had perished, and that the living were of all men most miserable. At verse 28 he returns to these points, and speaks of those who are baptised for the dead, in connection with the assertion, that if there were no resurrection those who had fallen asleep in Christ had perished; "if," he says, repeating more forcibly the expression in verse 16, "the dead rise not at all"; and then shows how entirely he is himself in the second case he had spoken of, "of all men most miserable," and almost in the case of perishing also, being every moment in danger, striving as with wild beasts, dying daily. Baptised, then, for the dead is to become a Christian with the view fixed on those who have fallen asleep in Christ, and particularly as being slain for Him, taking one's portion with the dead, yea, with the dead Christ; it is the very meaning of baptism (Romans 6). How senseless if they do not rise! As in 1 Thessalonians 4, the subject, while speaking of all Christians, is looked at in the same way. The word translated "for" is frequently used in these epistles for "in view of," "with reference to."

We have seen that verses 20-28 form a parenthesis. Verse 29 then is connected with verse 18. Verses 30-32 relate to verse 19. The historical explanations of these last verses is found in the second epistle (see chap. 1:8, 9; 4:8-12). I do not think that verse 32 should be taken literally. The

word translated “I have fought with beasts” is usually employed in a figurative sense, to be in conflict with fierce and implacable enemies. In consequence of the violence of the Ephesians he had nearly lost his life, and even despaired of saving it; but God had delivered him. But to what purpose all these sufferings, if the dead rise not? And observe here, that although the resurrection proves that death does not touch the soul (compare Luke 20:38), yet the apostle does not think of immortality,* apart from resurrection. God has to do so, with man? and man is composed of body and of soul. He gives account in the judgment of the things done in the body. It is when raised from the dead that he will do so. The intimate union between the two, quite distinct as they are, forms the spring of life, the seat of responsibility, the means of God’s government with regard to His creatures, and the sphere in which His dealings are displayed. Death dissolves this union; and although the soul survives, and is happy or miserable, the existence of the complete man is suspended, the judgment of God is not applied, the believer is not yet clothed with glory. Thus to deny the resurrection, was to deny the true relationship of God with man, and to make death the end of man, destroying man as God contemplates him, and making him perish like a beast. Compare the Lord’s argument in that passage in Luke of which I have already quoted one verse.

[* But, remark, mortality in the New Testament is never applied to anything but the body, and that exclusively and emphatically, “this mortal” and the like. The separate existence of the soul, as not dying with the body, is taught plainly enough in scripture, and not merely for the Christian (as to whom it is evident, for we are with Christ) but for all, as in Luke 20:38; 12:4, 5, and the end of chapter 16.]

Alas! the denial of the resurrection was linked with the desire to unbridle the senses. Satan introduced it into the heart of Christians through their communication with persons with whom the Spirit of Christ would have had no communion.

They needed to have their conscience exercised, to be awakened, in order that righteousness might have its place there. It is the lack of that which is commonly the true source of heresies. They failed in the knowledge of God. It was to the shame of these Christians. God grant us to take heed to it! It is the great matter even in questions of doctrine.

But further, the inquisitive spirit of man would fain be satisfied with respect to the physical mode of the resurrection. The apostle did not gratify it, while rebuking the stupid folly of those who had occasion every day to see analogous things in the creation that surrounded them. Fruit of the power of God, the raised body would be, according to the good pleasure of Him who gave it anew for the glorious abode of the soul, a body of honor, which, having passed through death, would assume that glorious condition which God had prepared for it — a body suited to the creature that possessed it, but according to the supreme will of Him who clothed the creature with it. There were different kinds of bodies; and as wheat was not the bare grain that had been sown, although a plant of its nature and not another, so should it be with the raised man. Different also were the glories of heavenly and earthly bodies: star differed from star in glory. I do not think that this passage refers to degrees of glory in heaven, but to the fact that God distributes glory as He pleases. Heavenly glory and earthly glory are however plainly put in contrast, for there will be an earthly glory.

And observe here, that it is not merely the fact of the resurrection which is set forth in this passage, but also its character. For the saints it will be a resurrection to heavenly glory. Their portion will be bodies incorruptible, glorious, vessels of power, spiritual. This body, sown as the grain of wheat for corruption, shall put on glory and incorruptibility.* It is only the saints that are here spoken of — "they also that are heavenly," and in connection with Christ, the second Adam. The apostle had said that the first body was "natural." Its life was that of the living soul; as to the body it partook of that kind of life which the other animals possessed — whatever might be its superiority as to its relationship with God, in that God Himself had breathed into his nostrils the spirit of life, so that man was thus in a special way in relationship with God (of His race, as the apostle said at Athens). "Adam, the son of God," said the Holy Ghost in Luke — made in the image of God. His conduct should have answered to it, and God had revealed Himself to him in order to place him morally in the position that was suitable to this breath of life which he had received. He had become — free as he was from death by the power of God who sustained him, or mortal by the sentence of Him who had formed him — a

living soul. There was not the quickening power in himself. The first Adam was simply a man — "the first man Adam."

[* It is a striking collateral proof of the completeness of our redemption, and the impossibility of our coming into judgment, that we are raised in glory. We are glorified before we arrive before the judgment seat. Christ will have come and changed our vile body and fashioned it like His glorious body.]

The word of God does not express itself thus with regard to Christ, when speaking of Him in this passage as the last Adam. He could not be the last Adam without being a man; but it does not say "the last man was a quickening Spirit," but the "last Adam"; and when it speaks of Him as the second Man, adds that He was "from heaven." Christ had not only life as a living soul, He had the power of life, which could impart life to others. Although He was a man on earth, He had life in Himself; accordingly He quickened whom He would. Nevertheless it is as the last Adam, the second Man, the Christ, that the word here speaks of Him. It is not only that God quickens whom He will, but the last Adam, Christ, the Head, spiritually, of the new race, has this power in Himself: and therefore it is said — for it is always Jesus on earth who is in question — "He hath given to the Son to have life in himself." Of us it is said, "God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son: he who hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Howbeit that which is of the Spirit is not that which was first, but that which is natural, that is, that which has the natural life of the soul. That which is spiritual, which has its life from the power of the Spirit, comes after. The first man is of the earth — has his origin, such as he is (God having breathed into his nostrils a spirit or breath of life), from the earth. Therefore he is of the dust, even as God said, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The last Adam, though He was as truly man as the first, is from heaven.

As belonging to the first Adam, we inherit his condition, we are as he is: as participating in the life of the second, we have part in the glory which He possesses as Man, we are as He is, we exist according to His mode of being, His life being ours. Now the consequence here is that, as we have born the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Observe here, that the first Adam and the last, or second Man, respectively, are looked at as in that condition into which they entered when their respective trials under responsibility had ended; and those who

are connected with the one and the other inherit the condition and the consequences of the work of the one and the other, as thus tested. It is the fallen Adam who is the father of a race born after his image — a fallen and guilty race, sinful and mortal. He had failed, and committed sin, and lost his position before God, was far from Him, when he became the father of the human race. If the corn of wheat falling into the ground does not die, it bears no fruit; if it die, it bears much fruit. Christ had glorified God, made expiation for sin, and was raised in righteousness; had overcome death and destroyed the power of Satan, before He became, as a quickening Spirit, the Head of a spiritual race,* to whom — united to Himself — He communicates all the privileges that belong to the position before God which He has acquired, according to the power of that life by which He quickens them. It is a risen and glorified Christ whose image we shall bear, as we now bear the image of a fallen Adam.

[* It is not that as Son of God He could not quicken at all times, as indeed He did. But in order to our partaking with Him, all this was needed and accomplished, and here He is looked at as Himself risen from the dead, the heavenly Man. Thus also it is founded in divine righteousness.]

Flesh and blood, not merely sin, cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Corruption (for such we are) cannot inherit that which is incorruptible. This leads the apostle to a positive revelation of that which will take place with regard to the enjoyment of incorruptibility by all the saints. Death is conquered. It is not necessary that death should come upon all, still less that all should undergo actual corruption; but it is not possible for flesh and blood to inherit the kingdom of glory. But we shall not all sleep; there are some who will be changed without dying. The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we (for redemption being accomplished and Christ ready to judge the quick and the dead, the apostle always looked at it as a thing immediately before his eyes, ready to take place any moment) shall be changed (a change equivalent to resurrection); for that which is corruptible, if not already in dust and corruption, shall put on incorruptibility; that which is mortal, immortality. We see that this relates to the body; it is in his body that man is mortal, even when he has eternal life, and shall live by Christ and with Christ. The power of God will form the saints whether living or dead for the inheritance of glory.

Take especial notice of what has just been said. Death is entirely conquered — annulled in its power — for the Christian. He possesses a life (Christ risen), which sets him above death, not perhaps physically, but morally. It has lost all its power over his soul, as the fruit of sin and judgment. It is so entirely conquered, that there are some who will not die at all. All Christians have Christ for their life. If He is absent, and if He does not return — as will be the case as long as He sits on His Father's throne, and our life is hid with Him in God — we undergo death physically according to the sentence of God; that is to say, the soul is separated from the mortal body. When He shall return and exercise His power, having risen up from the Father's throne to take His people to Himself before He exercises judgment, death has no power at all over them: they do not pass through it. That the others are raised from the dead is a proof of power altogether divine, and more glorious even than that which created man from the dust. That the living are changed proves a perfection of accomplished redemption, and a power of life in Christ which had left no trace, no remains, of the judgment of God as to them, nor of the power of the enemy, nor of the thralldom of man to the consequences of his sin. In place of all that, is an exercise of divine power, which manifests itself in the absolute, complete, and eternal deliverance of the poor guilty creature who before was under it — a deliverance that has its perfect manifestation in the glory of Christ, for He had subjected Himself in grace to the condition of man under death for sin; so that to faith it is always certain, and accomplished in His Person. But the resurrection of the dead and the change of the living will be its actual accomplishment for all who are His, at His coming. What a glorious deliverance is that which is wrought by the resurrection of Christ, who — sin entirely blotted out, righteousness divinely glorified and made good, Satan's power destroyed — transports us by virtue of an eternal redemption, and by the power of a life which has abolished death, into an entirely new sphere, where evil cannot come, nor any of its consequences, and where the favor of God in glory shines upon us perfectly and for ever! It is that which Christ has won for us according to the eternal love of God our Father, who gave Him to us to be our Savior.

At an unexpected moment we shall enter into this scene, ordained by the Father, prepared by Jesus. The power of God will accomplish this change in an instant: the dead shall rise, we shall be changed. The last trumpet is

but a military allusion, as it appears to me, when the whole troop wait for the last signal to set out all together.

In the quotation from Isaiah 25:8 we have a remarkable application of scripture. Here it is only the fact that death is thus swallowed up in victory, for which the passage is quoted; but the comparison with Isaiah shows us that it will be, not at the end of the world, but at a period when, by the establishment of the kingdom of God in Zion, the veil, under which the heathen have dwelt in ignorance and darkness, shall be taken off their face. The whole earth shall be enlightened, I do not say at the moment, but at the period. But this certainty of the destruction of death procures us a present confidence, although death still exists. Death has lost its sting, the grave its victory. All is changed by the grace which, at the end, will bring in this triumph. But meantime, by revealing to us the favor of God who bestows it, and the accomplishment of the redemption which is its basis, it has completely changed the character of death. Death, to the believer who must pass through it, is only leaving that which is mortal; it no longer bears the terror of God's judgment, nor that of the power of Satan. Christ has gone into it and born it and taken it away totally and for ever. Nor that only, He has taken its source away. It was sin which sharpened and envenomed that sting. It was the law which, presenting to the conscience exact righteousness, and the judgment of God which required the accomplishment of that law, and pronounced a curse on those who failed in it, it was the law which gave sin its force to the conscience, and made death doubly formidable. But Christ was made sin, and bore the curse of the law, being made a curse for His own who were under the law; and thus, while glorifying God perfectly with regard to sin, and to the law in its most absolute requirements, He has completely delivered us from the one and the other, and, at the same time, from the power of death, out of which He came victorious. All that death can do to us is to take us out of the scene in which it exercises its power, to bring us into that in which it has none. God, the Author of these counsels of grace, in whom is the power that accomplishes them, has given us this deliverance by Jesus Christ our Lord. Instead of fearing death, we render thanks to Him who has given us the victory by Jesus. The great result is to be with Jesus and like Jesus, and to see Him as He is. Meanwhile we labor in the scene where death exercises its power — where Satan uses it, if God allows him, to stop us in

our way. We labor although there are difficulties, with entire confidence, knowing what will be the infallible result. The path may be beset by the enemy; the end will be the fruit of the counsels and the power of our God, exercised on our behalf according to that which we have seen in Jesus, who is the Head and the manifestation of the glory which His own shall enjoy.

To sum up what has been said, we see the two things in Christ: firstly, power over all things, death included; He raises up even the wicked: and secondly, the association of His own with Himself. With reference therefore to the latter, the apostle directs our eyes to the resurrection of Christ Himself. He not only raises up others, but He has been raised up Himself from the dead. He is the first-fruits of them that sleep. But before His resurrection He died for our sins. All that separated us from God is entirely put away — death, the wrath of God, the power of Satan, sin, disappear, as far as we are concerned, in virtue of the work of Christ; and He is made to us that righteousness which is our title to heavenly glory. Nothing remains of that which appertained to His former human estate, except the everlasting favor of God who brought Him there. Thus it is a resurrection from among the dead by the power of God in virtue of that favor, because He was the delight of God, and in His exaltation His righteousness is accomplished.

For us it is a resurrection founded on redemption, and which we enjoy even now in the power of a life, which brings the effect and the strength of both into our hearts, enlightened by the Holy Ghost who is given to us. At the coming of Christ the accomplishment will take place in fact for our bodies.

With regard to practice, the assembly at Corinth was in a very poor condition; and being asleep as to righteousness, the enemy sought to lead them astray as to faith also. Nevertheless, as a body, they kept the foundation; and as to external spiritual power, it shone very brightly.

The apostle, in his letter, had treated of the disorder that reigned among these believers, and his spirit was to a certain degree relieved by fulfilling this duty towards them; for, after all, they were Christians and an assembly of God. In the last chapter he speaks to them in the sense of this, although he could not make up his mind to go to Corinth, for he had intended to visit them in going to Macedonia, and a second time in

returning thence. He does not say here why he did not go thither on his way to Macedonia, and he speaks with uncertainty as to his sojourn at Corinth when he should arrive there on his return from Macedonia; if the Lord permitted, he would tarry awhile with them. The second epistle will explain all this. In their existing state his heart would not allow him to visit them. But he treats them tenderly, nevertheless, as still beloved Christians, giving them directions suited to the circumstances of the moment. They were to make a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, as had been arranged with the apostles when Paul left Jerusalem as the recognised apostle of the Gentiles. This was not to be done in haste when he came, but by laying up every week in proportion to their prosperity. He would send persons chosen by the Corinthians, or take them with him if he went himself to Jerusalem. He thought of remaining till Pentecost at Ephesus, where a great door was opened to him and there were many adversaries. If these two things go together, it is a motive for remaining; the open door is an inducement on the part of God, the activity of adversaries makes it necessary with regard to the enemy. A closed door is a different thing from opposition. People do not hearken if the door is shut; God does not act to draw attention. If God is acting, the assiduity of the enemy is but a reason for not abandoning the work. It appears (chap. 15:32) that Paul had already suffered much at Ephesus, but he still continued his work there. He could not pour out his heart on the subject to the Corinthians, seeing the state they were in. He does it in the second Epistle, when the first had produced the effect he desired. There was a tumult afterwards at Ephesus, stirred up by the craftsmen, in consequence of which Paul left the city (Acts 19). Verses 21, 22, of this chapter in Acts show us the period at which he wrote this letter. The danger to his life had preceded it, but he remained at Ephesus after that. The tumult closed the door and sent him away.

In Acts 19:22 we see that he had sent Timothy into Macedonia. In our epistle he supposes that he might go on as far as Corinth. If he came, the Corinthians were to receive him as they would have received Paul. He had begged Apollos to go to them; he had already been made a blessing to them; and Paul thought he might be so again. He did not fear that Apollos would displace him in the heart of the Corinthians. But Apollos shared the apostle's feeling; he was not inclined to recognise, or by his presence to

have the appearance of upholding, that which prevented Paul going thither; and the more so because there were some in the assembly at Corinth who wished to use his name as the standard of a party. Free in his movements, he would act according to the judgment which the Lord would enable him to form.

After speaking of Apollos, the apostle's mind turns again to his children in the faith, dear to him, whatever their faults might be. Verses 13, 14, are the effusion of a heart which forgot these faults in the ardent desire of a charity that only thought of their blessing according to the Spirit. Three Corinthians had brought him supplies; it does not appear to have been on the part of the assembly, nor that it was any testimony of its love which had refreshed the apostle's heart. He would have the Corinthians to rejoice at it. He does not doubt that they loved him enough to be refreshed because it was so. Their charity had not thought of it beforehand; but he expresses his conviction that they took pleasure in the thought of his heart being refreshed. It is touching to see here, that the apostle's charity suggests that which grace would produce on the heart of the Corinthians, communicating that which they probably would not otherwise have known of — the active charity of three brethren of the assembly; and, in love uniting them to his joy, if they had not been united to that which occasioned it. The flame of charity communicates itself by rising above coldness, and reaching the depths of divine life in the heart; and, once communicated, the soul, before unkindled, glows now with the same fire.

We find in this chapter four channels, so to speak, of ministry. Firstly, the apostle, sent direct from the Lord and by the Holy Ghost. Secondly, persons associated with the apostle in his work, and acting at his desire, and (in the case of Timothy) one pointed out by prophecy. Thirdly, an entirely independent laborer, partly instructed by others (see Acts 18:26), but acting where he saw fit, according to the Lord and to the gift he had received. Fourthly, one who gives himself to the service of the saints, as well as others who helped the apostle and labored. Paul exhorts the faithful to submit themselves to such, and to all those who helped in the work and labored. He would also have them acknowledge those who refreshed his heart by their service of devotedness. Thus we find the simple and important principle according to which all the best affections of the heart are developed, namely, the acknowledgment of every one according to the

manifestation of grace and of the power of the Holy Ghost in him. The christian man submits to those who addict themselves to the service of the saints; he acknowledges those who manifest grace in a special way. They are not persons officially nominated and consecrated who are spoken of here. It is the conscience and the spiritual affection of Christians which acknowledges them according to their work — a principle valid at all times, which does not permit this respect to be demanded, but which requires it to be paid.

We may remark, here, that this epistle, although entering into all the details of the interior conduct of an assembly, does not speak of elders or of any formally established officers at all. It is certain, that in general there were such; but God has provided in the word for the walk of an assembly at all times, and, as we see, principles which oblige us to acknowledge those who serve in it through personal devotedness without being officially appointed. General unfaithfulness, or the absence of such established officers, will not prevent those who obey the word from following it in all that is needful for christian order. We see moreover that, whatever might be the disorder, the apostle recognises the members of the assembly as being all real Christians; he desires them to acknowledge one another by the kiss of love, the universal expression of brotherly affection. This is so entirely the case that he pronounces a solemn anathema on every one who loved not the Lord Jesus. There might be such, but he would in no way recognise them. If there were any, let them be anathema. Is this an allowed mixture? He will not believe it, and he embraces them all in the bonds of christian love (v. 24).

The last point is important. The state of the assembly at Corinth might give room for some uncertainty as to the Christianity of certain members, or persons in connection with them although not dwelling at Corinth. He admonishes them; but in fact, in cases of the most grievous sin where the discipline of God was exercised, or that of man was required, the guilty are looked upon as Christians. (See chap. 10 for the warning; chap. 11:32 for the Lord's discipline; for that of man, chap. 5:5 in this epistle; for the principle, 2 Corinthians 2:8). Besides, he denounces with an anathema those who do not love the Lord Jesus. Discipline is exercised towards the wicked man who is called a brother. He who calls himself a Christian, yet

does not really love the Lord — for there may be such — is the subject of the most terrible anathema.

It is sweet to see that, after faithfully (although with anguish of heart) correcting every abuse, the spirit of the apostle returns by grace into the enjoyments of charity in his relationship with the Corinthians. The terrible verse 22 was not felt to be inconsistent with the love that dictated the other verses. It was the same spirit, for Christ was the sole spring of his charity.

We may notice (v. 21) that the apostle, as other passages testify, employed some one to write for him. The Epistle to the Galatians is an exception. He verified his epistles to the assemblies by writing the salutation at the end with his own hand, marking the importance he attached to the exactitude of the verbal contents, and confirming the principle of an exact inspiration. His heart flows out (v. 24), and he comforts himself in being able to acknowledge them all in love.