

The First Epistle to the Corinthians

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Preface

The First Epistle to the Corinthians views the assembly of God in its privileges and responsibilities on earth, and presents God's appointed order for carrying out these responsibilities locally.

The grave disorders that existed in this assembly were the immediate occasion for the Epistle being written; it is therefore a corrective epistle. But it is evident that the apostle Paul, led by the Spirit of God, not only corrects the abuses in a local assembly in those early days, but also gives us divine and inspired instructions for all time as to the maintenance of holy discipline in the house of God, and

the divine order for God's people, as forming the body of Christ, when come together in assembly gatherings.

In the course of the Epistle we learn that there existed in this assembly moral laxity, assembly disorder and doctrinal error. One evil leads to the other. Experience has often proved that worldliness and moral laxity will be found behind assembly disorder and that assembly disorder opens the door to doctrinal error.

The main divisions of the Epistle deal with these evils in this order:

First, in 1 Corinthians 1 to 10 the apostle deals with the moral laxity by bringing in the Cross of Christ and the Holy Spirit to exclude the wisdom of this world and the licence of the flesh, and gives us directions for the maintenance of discipline amongst the people of God.

Secondly, in 1 Corinthians 11 to 14 the apostle deals with assembly disorder by presenting the free action of the Holy Spirit in the assembly viewed as the body of Christ.

Thirdly, in 1 Corinthians 15 he deals with the false doctrine that undermines the gospel and attacks the Person of Christ by denying the resurrection of the dead.

1 Corinthians 1.

(Vv. 1-3). In writing to the assembly at Corinth, Paul does so as an apostle, and is careful to state that he has received his authority as an apostle by the call of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and not as appointed by man or according to the will of man. Though writing as an apostle he is quite free to associate with himself a brother. If this brother is the Sosthenes who, in days past, had been the chief ruler of the synagogue at Corinth, he would be well-known to them (Acts 18: 17). He addresses the assembly of God at Corinth as those that are “sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints”. He thus views the saints as set apart for Christ as they pass through this world, and at the same time called out of this present evil world to have part with Christ above, for our calling is “heavenly” and “on high” (Hebrews 3: 1; Philippians 3: 14).

The apostle, while addressing the church at Corinth, links with them “all that in every place call on the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours”. There is only one Lord of whom each local assembly can say, in reference to all others, He is both theirs and ours. This is of the deepest importance in an epistle which deals with the practical conduct of the Christian, and the maintenance of discipline and order in the assembly. It clearly shows that the instructions apply to the whole Christian profession for all time. Again and again in the course of the Epistle we shall find passages that refute the attempt to limit the instruction to a local assembly and the apostolic age. (See 1 Cor. 4: 17; 1 Cor. 7: 17; 1 Cor. 11: 16; 1 Cor. 14: 36, 37; 1 Cor. 16: 1.) The apostle will have to speak plainly as to the disorder in this assembly, but behind all his plain words of condemnation his earnest desire is that they may enjoy the blessings of grace and peace from “God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ”.

(Vv. 4-9). Though he will have much to correct in this assembly owing to their low state, he nevertheless thankfully acknowledges the grace of God towards them, and the faithfulness of God with them. The grace of God had come to them, as to us all, in virtue of Jesus Christ. This grace had enriched them with every spiritual blessing in Christ and given them “all word of doctrine” and “all knowledge” of the doctrine. There had been a testimony to Christ in their midst, confirmed by the knowledge of the truth that they possessed, and the fact that they came behind in no gift and were waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Moreover, the grace that had so richly blessed them would confirm them to the end, so that, however much the apostle may have to correct in their present

condition, in the day of the Lord they would be blameless.

Further, however unfaithful the saints may be, the apostle can give thanks that “God is faithful”, by whom believers are “called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord”. Here, let it be noted, it is not fellowship with His Son, but the fellow-ship of His Son, a fellowship of which Christ, as Lord, is the bond, and which embraces all that call upon His Name. This is true Christian fellowship, and the only one that Scripture recognises. Christians may form other fellowships of which the bond is the maintenance of some important truth, or the carrying out of some special work, but such fellowships are sectarian in character and of necessity fall far short of the fellowship into which we are called, and which has the Lord for its bond, the Lord's Supper for its deepest expression, and the Holy Spirit for its directing power (1 Cor. 10: 16, 17; 2 Cor. 13: 14). One generation may pass and another arise, but the one Lord (Ephesians 4: 5) remains, and however great the ruin and confusion in the Christian profession, His mind for the conduct of those called into the fellowship of which He is the bond, and for the discipline and ordering of God's assemblies, remains in all its force as unfolded in this Epistle.

It is noticeable that, while thanking God for His grace, the apostle is unable to express any approval of their spiritual condition. While delighting to own the faithfulness of God, he cannot address them as “faithful brethren”, as he does when writing to the saints at Ephesus and Colosse (Ephesians 1: 1; Colossians 1: 2). Alas, he has to own a little later that, in spite of having “all knowledge” and coming “behind in no gift”, they were “yet carnal”, and he cannot speak to them “as unto spiritual”. The flesh can boast in knowledge and use gifts for self-exaltation, but we do well to remember that mere knowledge, and the possession of all gifts, will not avert disorder or secure spirituality if the flesh is unjudged.

Having thus recognised what was of God in the assembly, the apostle begins to deal with the disorders prevalent in their midst which hindered their spiritual growth and testimony for Christ.

(Vv. 10, 11). The first great evil dealt with is the state of division that existed in their midst. “There are”, writes the apostle, “strifes among you”; and again in 1 Cor. 11: 18, “I hear there exist divisions among you”. He opens this subject with an appeal to which he attaches the gravest importance by invoking “the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”. He has just reminded the assembly at Corinth, and ourselves, that we “have been called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord”. This call, carrying with it many privileges, involves the responsibility of being true to the fellowship in our walk and ways. In order to enjoy our privileges, and carry out our responsibilities, we are exhorted to be perfectly united together in the same mind and the same opinion, so that there be no division among the people of God, or breach in the fellowship.

(V. 12). The apostle proceeds to expose the root from which divisions spring. “Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ”. On the one hand they were exalting gifted servants of the Lord into a false position as centres of gathering, which is the evil principle of *clericalism*; on the other hand they were forming themselves into parties round these servants and thus commencing the evil of *sectarianism*.

It may be asked, what of the individuals who disclaimed all men as leaders, and said, “I of Christ”? These really were worse than others, for they were attempting to make Christ the leader of a party and ignore the gifts that Christ had given. It was the assumption of superior spirituality that professed to be able to dispense with the ministry of others, and the pretension to appropriate Christ exclusively to themselves.

The evil here is the converse of that of which the apostle speaks in Acts 20: 30. There he warned

the Ephesian elders that trouble would arise from leaders; here he states that it arises from disciples. There he speaks of what would occur after his decease, here of what was taking place in his lifetime. One evil leads to the other. The evil that commences with Christians forming parties round leaders ends with the leaders teaching perverse things. This solemn principle, which showed itself at Corinth, has been at work throughout the history of the church with like disastrous results. People have ranged themselves round favourite teachers, and the leaders, allowing themselves to be placed in this false position, have eventually taught perverse things and brought division amongst the people of God by drawing away disciples after themselves.

(Vv. 13-16). The apostle condemns their sectarianism by asking, "Is Christ divided?". We are called into a fellowship of which Christ is the bond. We may, alas, form other fellowships with some other bond, but we cannot divide Christ. Then he condemns their clericalism by asking, "Was Paul crucified for you?". Paul refused to be exalted into a false position as a centre of gathering for God's people. The only true centre of gathering for the people of God is the One Who has proved His claim over them by being crucified for them. Paul, however much he loved the people of God, had not been crucified for them. He will not usurp the place in the affections of God's people that alone belongs to the crucified One. His one object, as with every true servant, was, as he says, to espouse them to one husband that he might present them as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Cor. 11: 2). Nor had Paul made himself a centre of gathering by baptizing unto the name of Paul. In fact he had only baptized Crispus and Gaius, and also the household of Stephanas; as for the rest of these Corinthian saints, he had refrained from baptizing them lest any should say that he was baptizing unto his own name and so seeking to form a party round himself. In thus exalting their favourite teachers, and seeking to gain distinction for themselves by following them, they were glorying in men rather than in the Lord, in the gifts rather than the Giver.

In order to meet this evil the apostle insists on two great truths: first, the Cross of Christ, the great theme of the remainder of this chapter; secondly, the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the great theme of the second chapter. He will have much to correct in detail as to their conduct, but before doing so he seeks to establish them in the great truths that entirely exclude the flesh, the allowance of which lies at the root of all disorder in the church of God. The Cross deals with the flesh in judgment before God. The presence of the Holy Spirit is intolerant of the flesh in the assembly of God on earth. It is a solemn consideration for us all that, whenever we allow the flesh to manifest itself in the assembly of God, we practically deny the work of the Cross, and ignore the presence of the Holy Spirit.

First, the apostle speaks of the Cross of Christ in verse 17. In connection with this we have the preaching of the Cross in verses 18-25, the calling of God in verses 26-29, and, finally, the position into which the call of God brings us in verses 30 and 31. Every one of these truths entirely excludes the flesh and leads to the conclusion that, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord".

1. The Cross of Christ.

(V. 17). The apostle first of all upholds before these believers the Cross of Christ. He had been sent, not to baptize, but to preach the glad tidings. The preaching was not to be with wisdom of words lest the Cross of Christ should be made of none effect. The gospel cannot be set forth by mere words; it is set forth by the Cross. It is a deeply important principle to apprehend that God acquaints us with Himself by His actions, and not simply by descriptions or statements of Himself. Philosophy and theology seek to describe God; but description requires the wisdom of words, and the wisdom of words demands human learning to frame and understand the words. God is too great to be described by

words, and we are too small to take in mere descriptions. God has thus taken another way, indeed the only way possible, to make Himself and His glad tidings known. He has made Himself known personally and in actions. God has become manifest in flesh in the Person of Christ, and made Himself known in all His activities amongst men. And these activities of grace and love and holiness culminate in the Cross of Christ. The Cross is the greatest possible setting forth of the love of God to the sinner, of the hatred of God against sin, and of the setting aside of man in the flesh.

This being so, the apostle refuses to announce the glad tidings by mere descriptions, which entail the wisdom of words, but upholds before them the Cross of Christ, which sets aside the man that the Corinthians were exalting.

2. The preaching of the Cross.

(Vv. 18-25). Philosophers prefer their learned dissertations; therefore the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness. The wise of this world do not see the glory of the Person Who was nailed to the Cross, and hence they do not see the love of God that gave Him to suffer, nor the holiness of God that demanded such a sacrifice, nor the utter ruin of man set forth in the Cross. All they see is a Man nailed to a Cross between two thieves; so the preaching of salvation through the Cross appears to them utter folly. Those who think thus are those who perish. To those who are saved the Cross is the power of God to save, for thereby God can righteously save the vilest sinner.

The wisdom of the world is thus exposed and brought to nothing. The world had ample time to develop its wisdom, the result being that all the wisdom of the philosophers was shown to be folly, inasmuch as it left man in complete ignorance of God. The end of all man's wisdom is that "the world by wisdom knew not God". It was not that the world by its ignorance or stupidity knew not God, but by wisdom it knew not God. The net result of all the wisdom of the ages — the combined efforts of the keenest intellects of the world — is to leave man in utter ignorance of God, and in utter ignorance of himself. When the complete failure of man's wisdom had been demonstrated, then it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

But God's way of revealing Himself and blessing man is equally offensive to Jews and Gentiles. The Jews looked for a "sign", some miraculous intervention of God that appealed to the senses; the Gentiles looked for philosophic reasoning that appealed to the mind. God appeals to the conscience and heart through Christ crucified. This, however, was a stumbling-block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles.

The Jews looked for a Messiah reigning in power from a throne, One Who would revive the kingdom, put down their enemies, and set Israel at the head of the nations. Christ reigning on a throne they could understand; Christ crucified on a Cross was an offence to them. Having no sense of their need as sinners, they could see no meaning in the Cross. To them in their unbelief it became a stumbling-block.

As for the Gentiles, who looked for something that appealed to reason — some new thing, some scheme of philosophy — to tell them there was salvation through a crucified Man, life through a dying Man, power through One Who was crucified through weakness, was to speak of that which in their sight was utter foolishness. Nevertheless, unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is God's power and God's wisdom. In Him such discover God's power to save, and God's wisdom in carrying out all His purposes.

To the mind of man the preaching is "the foolishness of God" and the Cross "the weakness of

God". Be it so, it will but prove that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men".

3. The calling of God.

(Vv. 26-29). The apostle has set aside the religious flesh of the Jew, and the intellectual flesh of the Gentile, by presenting the Cross and the preaching of the Cross. Now he sets aside the pride of the flesh by presenting the calling of God. "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." The foolish, the weak, the base, the despised, and things that are not hath God chosen to confound the wise and "bring to nought things that are". Thus it came to pass that a blind beggar confounded the wise Pharisees, and simple fishermen so utterly confounded the wise rulers of Israel that they were compelled to say, "What shall we do?".

God thus uses "things which are not, to bring to nought things that are". In the apostles' day the things by which men sought to exalt themselves were Judaism and philosophy; and God used simple men to bring these things to nought, in order that no flesh should glory in His presence.

The flesh must glory in something, either birth or riches or intellect; but in the presence of God neither believer nor unbeliever can glory in these things. Alas, in the presence of one another we may seek to exalt ourselves by birth, or riches, or wisdom, or accomplishments; but in the presence of Christ we are ashamed of the very things in which we glory before one another. We dare not mention them in His presence, save to condemn ourselves for glorying in them. To glory in them only shows how little we are in His presence.

4. The believer's position in Christ.

(Vv. 30, 31). Finally, the apostle sets aside the flesh by setting forth the believer's origin and position. The believer is "of God". How far greater to be "of God" than to be of the high-born, of the mighty, of the wise, or of the rich. Yet more, we are of God "in Christ Jesus". Not only have we an origin of God, but we are set in an entirely new position before God — we are "in Christ Jesus". We do not stand before God in the condition and position of Adam, away from God and under judgment, but we are in Christ in all His meetness for God and for heaven.

Nor is this all. We may have but little wisdom of our own; nevertheless, Christ is made unto us wisdom. We need not turn for wisdom to philosophy, to wise men, or to our own fancied wisdom, for we have Christ. Having Christ we see at once what all the wisdom of the world can never teach us. Christ, on the Cross, has fully shown us our ruin and made God known in His love. Christ in the glory sets forth all the purposes of God. In Christ we see the wisdom of God in meeting our ruin and in fulfilling His purpose.

Further, Christ is made unto us righteousness. We have no righteousness for God. God's righteousness is seen in justifying us consistently with Himself through the death of Christ. If we want to know what this righteousness is, and how perfectly it suits us for the glory, then we need not look to man or at ourselves, but at Christ. It is set forth in Christ in the glory.

Christ is also made unto us sanctification. Christ is the measure of, the pattern of, and the power for, sanctification. Finally, Christ is made unto us redemption, "the complete deliverance from the effects of sin in our bodies", for which we wait. We see this redemption already set forth in Christ; we have it now in Christ our Head; we wait for it to be manifested in ourselves.

Having, then, everything in Christ, and nothing in man as such, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”. Thus the Cross, the preaching of the Cross, the call of God, and our position in Christ before God, entirely shut out the flesh.

1 Corinthians 2.

In the first chapter the apostle has shown that Christ crucified, the preaching of the Cross, and the calling of God, entirely set aside the flesh, leaving no room for man to glory in himself. In this chapter the apostle applies the teaching of 1 Corinthians 1 to himself and his manner of presenting the testimony of God. In accord with his own teaching he refused the flesh in himself in order to be true to the Cross, and that there might be no hindrance to the work of the Spirit. In the first five verses the apostle tells us how he preached the gospel to sinners. The latter part of the chapter tells us how he ministered the deep things of God to the saints. In either case it was in the power of the Spirit. This leads the apostle to present the Holy Spirit Who, in His gracious work, entirely sets aside the flesh and instructs us in the mind of Christ.

(Vv. 1, 2). When Paul came to Corinth he made no appeal to the natural man by attempting to use excellency of speech or by a display of human wisdom. He came to announce the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ and Him crucified. The great *subject* of his preaching was a Person — Jesus Christ — but that Person on a Cross, the lowest and most degraded position in which a man can be found. Paul tells these intellectual Corinthians that, in order that sinners be saved, Christ must go to the Cross. To give believers His place before God, He had to take their place before God. The Cross sets forth our true place before God as sinners. There is nothing dignified, or heroic, or noble about a cross. It is a place of shame and reproach, of judgment and death. To tell a man that this is his true place before God makes nothing of all his wisdom and greatness and grandeur. However wise, however rich, however well-born a man may be, the Cross tells him that, in spite of all that he may be before his fellow-men, in the sight of God he is a guilty sinner under the sentence of death and judgment. The preaching of the Cross thus makes nothing of all man's pride.

(V. 3). Moreover, the preacher himself was among them in a *condition* that was humiliating to the pride of man. He did not come as a self-confident orator. Conscious of his own weakness, realising the deep need of those to whom he preached, and the gravity of his message, he was amongst them in fear and much trembling.

(Vv. 4, 5). Furthermore, in the *manner* of his preaching he refused every fleshly method in order to leave room for God to work. He did not seek to win his audience by a display of his own wisdom or natural ability. He did not set forth the testimony of God in eloquent language, which might have appealed to their refined ears and attracted to himself.

In the *subject* preached, in the *condition* of the preacher, and in the *manner* of preaching, there was no allowance of flesh with the apostle, and no appeal to the flesh in his hearers.

This entire refusal to use fleshly means, or appeal to the flesh, left room for the Spirit to work in mighty power. If under such preaching there is faith — if any believe in that which is so humiliating to man, which ends man in judgment — then obviously it is not the wisdom of man that leads them to believe, but the power of the Spirit of God working with them. Under such preaching the Spirit is able to demonstrate to sinners their deep need, and to work in unhindered power, leading them to faith which rests not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. It is not only a question of the truth they believed, but of the way in which they received it. It was received not from a man, even though that

man was an apostle, but from God.

(V. 6). From this verse the apostle begins to speak of the attitude he took towards those who were the subjects of the power of God, and thus had accepted the gospel. He speaks of them as the “perfect”. By this term he does not mean that which some speak of as “sinless perfection”, or that they were already conformed to the image of Christ; this will only be in glory. The term “perfect” implies that such had accepted the new position before God that belongs to the believer in Christ, and thus were full-grown Christians. The term does not simply designate a believer in contrast to a sinner; it is used rather to describe a full-grown believer in contrast to some believers of whom the apostle speaks as “babes” (1 Cor. 3: 1).

(V. 7). Amongst such Paul did indeed speak wisdom. The apostle then proceeds to give us some very definite instruction as to this wisdom, in order that we may not confuse it with the wisdom of man.

First, he tells us that it is not the wisdom of this age, nor even the wisdom of the few intellectual giants who mould the thoughts of the world. These intellectual princes, in spite of all their wisdom, “come to nought”, in contrast to the believer who comes to “glory” (verse 7), in company with “the Lord of glory” (verse 8). Those who shine in the glory of this world come to nought, while those who are nought in this world come to glory.

Secondly, this wisdom is “the wisdom of God”. If it were the wisdom of man, it could be acquired in the schools of men. Being God's wisdom it is outside the programme of the schools, and beyond the attainment of the human mind.

Thirdly, it is God's wisdom “in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom”, words that by no means imply that it is obscure or mysterious, but that it is a wisdom that cannot be discovered by the wit of man. Moreover, throughout the ages it has been “hidden”, and therefore is not to be found in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Fourthly, this wisdom, which throughout the ages has been hidden, was predetermined before the ages for our glory in the ages yet to come. This wisdom embraced the secret counsel of God, settled before the ages, for the glory of His people. We might have thought that the apostle would have said for the glory of God and of Christ. We know indeed it will be for the glory of Christ. Here, however, the apostle is pressing upon us the fact that, if our calling makes manifest that believers are the weak and despised of the world, nonetheless they are predestined to glory. We may not be wise, or mighty, or noble in this world, but we are called to glory.

(V. 8). Fifthly, of this wisdom, settled before the ages, and of this glory, to which we are predestined for the ages yet to come, the princes of this world knew nothing. They proved their ignorance by crucifying the Lord of glory. They wholly rejected the One Who is the wisdom of God, and by Whom all the counsels of God are brought to pass. This wisdom of God in a mystery tells believers that they are predestined to glory, and the One Who has been crucified is “the Lord of glory”. This glory exceeds the glory of Christ as the Messiah, in connection with Israel, reigning over the earth. The earthly reign is no mystery. The Prophets are full of glorious predictions concerning the kingdom glories. “The Lord of glory” speaks of a wider scene than this earth; it speaks of a universal dominion embracing every created thing and being, over which the crucified One is made Lord.

(V. 9). Sixthly, this scene of glory, to which the wisdom of God has destined His people, lies outside the range of the natural man. The apostle thus quotes the prophet Isaiah to show that God has secrets, into which man as such cannot enter. His eye, aided by marvellous instruments, can see far into the depths of space and into the minute wonders of nature; his ear can be trained to hear and appreciate

wonderful combinations of melodious sounds; his mind is capable of marvellous conceptions and emotions; but there are things which God has prepared for them that love Him that the natural man has neither seen nor heard, and which are beyond the range of the highest flights of his imagination.

(V. 10). Seventhly, the fact that the wisdom of God lies outside the comprehension of the natural man does not imply that the things of wisdom cannot be seen, cannot be heard, and cannot be known, for at once the apostle says, “God hath *revealed* them”. The things that God has *prepared* God has *revealed*. If, however, God has revealed these things, it is “by His Spirit”. The Spirit alone is competent to reveal these things, for nothing is beyond the range of the divine knowledge and power of the Spirit. He searcheth *all things*, yea the deep things of God. We may seek to excuse our lack of spiritual energy by saying that these things are too deep for us; but let us remember that they are not too deep for the Spirit, for He “searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God”.

(V. 11). What is in man's mind is not known to any but the spirit of the man himself who has the thoughts. No one knows the uncommunicated thought of my mind except my own spirit; so no one knows the uncommunicated thoughts and counsels of God save the Spirit of God.

(V. 12). The apostle and other vessels of revelation received the Spirit which is of God that they might know the things that are freely given to us of God. “This is the knowledge of the things themselves in the vessels of revelation.” In the primary sense the truth of these verses, 10 to 12, is limited to the apostles; it is *revelation* that is the subject.

(V. 13). Furthermore, the things which were made known to the apostles by the revelation of the Spirit have been passed on to us by the inspiration of the Spirit. In the communication of these things the apostle is careful to shut out any possible error of man by saying that these things are not communicated “*in the words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth”. This is the apostolic claim for verbal inspiration. The very words used are inspired by the Holy Ghost. Spiritual things are communicated by spiritual means. The instruments were not made infallible, but were perfectly guided in their communications. This is inspiration.

(Vv. 14, 15). Thus we learn that the wisdom of God is made known by revelation and communicated to others by inspiration. Now we learn that the reception of the truth is also by the Spirit of God. The natural man cannot receive the things of God; they are foolishness to him; they can only be spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth all things. We do well to remember that it is the “spiritual”, not simply he that has the Spirit, that discerneth all things. A man must, indeed, have the Spirit to be spiritual; but being spiritual implies a condition in which a man is under the control of the Spirit. Such discern all things, yet they themselves are not discerned of any. The spiritual man can discern the motives that govern the world, though the world cannot discern the motives and principles that govern the spiritual man.

In verse 14 the apostle speaks of the natural man, in verse 15 of the spiritual man, and in 1 Corinthians 3 of the carnal, or fleshly, man. The natural man is the unconverted man, without the Spirit; the carnal man is the believer, having the Spirit, but walking like the natural man; the spiritual man is the believer walking in the Spirit.

(V. 16). In verse 15 the apostle tells us that “the spiritual discerns all things”. It is not indeed that such naturally know the mind of the Lord, or can instruct Him; but the Lord has given to believers His Spirit and instructs them; such can therefore say, “We have the mind of Christ”.

If the first chapter shuts out the flesh in its pride of birth and power and position, so that he that will glory glories in the Lord, this chapter shuts out the mind of man, so that believers may be let into

the privilege of having “the mind of Christ” through the Spirit.

The Spirit is the great theme of the chapter. If Paul brings the testimony of God to sinners, it is “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (verse 4). If God has prepared great blessings for those who love Him, they are revealed unto the apostles by the Spirit (verse 10). The things that are revealed by the Spirit are fully known to the Spirit (verses 10 and 11). The things revealed and known to the apostles are, through them, communicated to others by the Spirit (verse 13). The things communicated by the apostles are received by the Spirit (verse 14), the result being that believers are, through the Spirit, instructed in the mind of Christ (verse 16).

1 Corinthians 3.

Having brought before us the Cross as setting aside the flesh in judgment, and the Holy Spirit as setting aside the wisdom of this world, the apostle now returns to the theme with which he commenced the Epistle, the state of division that existed in the assembly at Corinth. Later he will deal with other manifestations of the flesh, but, apparently, he deals first with this particular evil, for, as so often since that day, a divided state in the assembly renders it difficult, if not impossible, to correct other abuses.

The apostle first refers to the low condition of the assembly proved by their fleshly attitude towards the servants of God (verses 1-4). To correct this abuse of gifts and gifted servants, the apostle gives valuable instruction as to service, or work, for the Lord (verses 5-23), and as to the servants, or workmen, in 1 Cor. 4.

1. *The low spiritual condition of the assembly.*

(Vv. 1-4). With all their boasted wisdom and knowledge and gifts the Corinthian assembly was in such a low spiritual condition that the apostle was unable to minister to them the deep things of God. It is true they were not *natural* men that have not the Spirit (1 Cor. 2: 14), nor were they *spiritual* men walking according to the Spirit, but the apostle has to say, “Are ye not *carnal*?”. They were believers, having the Spirit, but walking according to the flesh. How deeply humbling to discover that it is possible to be enriched with all utterance and knowledge and gift, and be “full” and “wise in Christ” and “strong” (1 Cor. 4: 8-10), and yet, in the sight of God, be carnal, or spiritually undeveloped, like a babe that has ceased to grow, and therefore unable to assimilate the rich, spiritual food that God has provided for His people.

The apostle convicts them of their carnality by calling attention to the conditions that existed amongst them. He says, “There is among you envying, and strife”. In their practical ways they walked as natural men. Instead of serving one another in love, as becomes saints, they were envious of one another and seeking to equal, or excel, one another in knowledge and the exercise of gifts, even as men of the world. *Envy* was thus at the root of all their strife. Perhaps there is no greater power for evil in the world than envy. Envy led to the first murder in the world, when Cain rose up against his brother and slew him; and envy led to the greatest murder in the world, when the Jews killed the Prince of life, for we read that Pilate “knew that for envy they had delivered Him” (Matthew 27: 18). Will it not be found that envy has been the main cause of all the strifes amongst the people of God? The apostle Peter warns us that envy knows no pity. It leads to “malice” and “evil speakings”, and the malice leads to “guile” by which a man attempts to cover up what he is, and “hypocrisies” by which a man pretends to be what he is not (1 Peter 2: 1).

These Corinthian saints pandered to this spirit of emulation by attaching themselves to certain

gifted teachers, and by closely following and accepting all they said, not necessarily because it was the truth according to the word of God, but because it was advanced by a favourite teacher. One said, "I am of Paul"; another said, "I am of Apollos". Each seeking to defend his favourite teacher naturally led to strife, and strife to divisions. Thus men were followed, individuals were exalted, and divisions resulted. Two evils followed: one was sectarianism, which set aside the truth of the assembly, the other clericalism, which set aside Christ as the Head of the assembly.

2. Instruction as to service.

(V. 5). To correct this abuse of gifts, the apostle first presents some important truths as to service and the different forms it may take.

First, the apostle asks, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos?". These gifted brothers, whom the Corinthian assembly had been exalting into the false position as leaders of parties, were, after all, but "ministering servants" by whom the Corinthians had believed.

Secondly, these gifted men held their position as servants, not according to man's appointment, but "as the Lord has given to each".

(V. 6). Thirdly, these servants had not all been given the same service. As in the field, one plants and another tends the plants, but God alone can cause the plants to grow, so, in the service of the Lord, Paul may be used to obtain converts and Apollos be used to care for the converts, but God alone can give life and spiritual growth.

(V. 7). Fourthly, if it is God that giveth the increase, then the servants that the Corinthians had been exalting out of their place were comparatively very insignificant. Without God they were nothing and their service useless.

(V. 8). Fifthly, though different work may be given to the servants yet they "are one". By constituting them leaders of parties the Corinthian assembly were setting them in opposition to one another. But none can do without the other. However varied the gifts, as servants they are one.

Sixthly, though one as servants, "each shall receive his own reward according to his own labour". The reward will not be according to the position that man may have given the servant, nor according to man's thoughts of his service, but according to God's estimate of his labours.

(V. 9). Seventhly, we are reminded that the servants are "God's fellow-workmen", words that do not imply that they are labourers together with God, but that they work together under the direction of God. They are not rivals, as men would make them, but fellow-companions.

Such is the service of the labourers; but what of the saints that are served? Are they merely man-made sects, such as the Corinthians were forming, to be dominated by certain gifted leaders? Paul's answer is that, instead of being sects, taking their character from certain gifted men such as Paul and Apollos, they belong to God. They are "God's husbandry" and "God's building". First, they are viewed under the figure of a field in which there is fruit, or increase, for God; secondly, they are looked at as a temple in which the Spirit of God dwells and where there is light for men. Already the Lord in His teaching has connected fruit with the field and light with the house (Luke 8: 15, 16). The truth by which Paul met, and condemned, divisions in those early days is still the truth that condemns the divisions of Christendom in our day. If we realise that we belong to God, that we are "God's husbandry" and "God's building", we shall surely refuse to be called by any sectarian name.

(Vv. 10, 11). The saints truly belong to God. Nevertheless, the servants of God have their special

service in connection with the people of God according to the special grace given by God. Of his own special service the apostle proceeds to speak, and then of the responsibility of others who follow him in service. Paul had been used to lay the foundation of the assembly at Corinth in his testimony to Jesus Christ. He preached Christ, with the result that a company of people was led to believe in Jesus. In apostolic power and grace the foundation had been truly laid — Christ in the souls of believers. It was the responsibility of other servants who followed to edify these saints.

It is important to remember that in this passage “God's building” presents a very different view of the church to that which is brought before us in Matthew 16: 18, 1 Peter 2: 4, 5 and Ephesians 2: 20, 21. In these passages the church is viewed as a building against which the power of Satan cannot prevail, a holy temple into which no defilement can enter, of which the Builder is Christ, and with which no workmen are mentioned. Here, although the assembly is spoken of as God's building, workmen are employed.

(V. 12). Following upon the laying of the foundation by the apostle Paul, we have the solemn possibility of the breakdown in responsibility of those who continue to build upon the foundation through building with bad material. A man may teach sound doctrine, or that which is worthless. Moreover, the figures used, “gold, silver, precious stones”, would suggest that there are differences in the value of the doctrines taught, even as “wood, hay, stubble” would suggest that some errors are worse than others.

(V. 13). The work of each one will be tested by the day of trial. The day looks on to the revelation of Christ from heaven in flaming fire (2 Thessalonians 1: 7, 8). Anything built with wood, hay or stubble will not stand the fire of judgment. Souls may be held together for a time with false doctrine, as we see on every hand in Christendom, but such work will not stand the fire.

(V. 14). The apostle makes a distinction amongst three classes of workmen. First, he speaks of the true workman who does good work. He teaches sound doctrine, whereby the saints are edified. His work abides, and he himself will receive a reward.

(V. 15). Secondly, he speaks of a true workman, but whose work is bad and therefore burned. A builder may see his building destroyed by fire, though he may escape. So the day of Christ may prove that a man has taught doctrines which were erroneous, and therefore his work, in connection with the people of God, worthless, though he himself is on the foundation — a true believer in Jesus. Such will be saved, though his work is destroyed and he loses his reward.

(Vv. 16, 17). Thirdly, the apostle speaks of a bad workman and bad work. We are reminded that the assembly of God, viewed as a whole, is the temple of God in which the Spirit of God dwells. It is not merely that there are converted people on earth, but God has His house or temple. We are to look at ourselves, not as isolated individuals, but as forming part of God's dwelling on earth, and holiness becomes God's house. It thus becomes intensely solemn if any defiles or corrupts the house of God. We have seen that there are those who edify the people of God with sound doctrine. Then there are those who present defective views of truth, or a false interpretation of the word. Lastly, there is the far worse case of one who teaches false doctrines that destroy the fundamental truths of God and undermine the foundations of Christianity. The fact that a man can teach such doctrines is a sure proof that he himself is not on the foundation. He is a corrupter and will be destroyed as well as his work. The effect of his work is to destroy God's temple, and God destroys him.

Whether the doctrines taught are good, worthless or destructive, they will all be tested. Much that passes muster now in that day may be found worthless or, what is worse, corrupt.

(V. 18). These solemn considerations lead to the apostle's warning, "Let no man deceive himself". It is possible, then, to deceive oneself that what is being taught is true, when, in fact, it is worthless. The great source of deception is the attempt to stand well with the world by seeking to accommodate Christianity to the wisdom of this world. The servant who will stand for the truth must be content to become a fool in the eyes of the world; then, indeed, he will have the true wisdom according to God. It was so with the apostle, of whom the worldly Festus could say, "Thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad".

(Vv. 19, 20). The wisdom of this world commands the respect of the natural man, and at times may look very attractive even to the Christian, as in the case of the Corinthian saints; nevertheless, it is foolishness with God. The very wisdom of the world becomes its undoing, for it is written, "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness". The wisdom of this world is mere craft, which entraps those who boast in it. The Lord knoweth that the "reasonings" of the wise are vain (N.Tn.).

(Vv. 21-23). As Christians, therefore, we are warned against glorying in men. To do so would be to place ourselves in the apparently false position of belonging to those in whom we glory. As Christians we do not belong to men, but all things belong to us in the sense that we are set above all as belonging to Christ. The Corinthians were ranging themselves under certain teachers as if they belonged to different gifted men. No, says the apostle, they all belong to you. The world with all its power, life with all its changes, death with its terrors, even as all that can happen in the present or future, are set under the Christian because he belongs to Christ, and Christ is God's. God is over all, Christ is God's, we are Christ's, and all things are ours.

1 Corinthians 4.

The instruction in 1 Cor. 3 has service, or "work", more especially in view. (See verses 8, 13, 14 and 15.) The teaching in 1 Cor. 4 refers more definitely to the servant. The Corinthian believers were walking as men (1 Cor. 3: 3), and thus making much of man's day and man's world. Being accustomed in the world around them to schools of opinion under the leadership of different philosophers, they were tempted, in like manner, to form different parties under the leadership of gifted men in the assembly of God. To correct these worldly ideas and wrong practices, the apostle sets before us the truth as to the servants of Christ in relation to Christ and to the world.

(V. 1). The Corinthian assembly had sought to make gifted brothers the leaders of parties. The apostle reminds them that, so far from being centres of gathering for God's people, these gifted men were actually "servants", thus reminding us of our Lord's own words, "Whosoever will be great among you, shall be your servant; and whosoever will be first among you, let him be your bondman" (Matthew 20: 26, 27). Further, though taking the place of servants, they were not the servants of parties, but "the servants of Christ". The word used for "minister", or "servant", in this passage implies, we are told, "an appointed servant". Paul and his fellow-labourers were servants by the appointment of Christ. This is of importance, for the One Who appoints is the One Who is feared and to Whom the servant will have to answer. In Christianity, as set forth in Scripture, the true servant, being "the servant of Christ", is delivered from the fear of man and is thus able to set forth the full truth with great plainness of speech.

Furthermore, the servants of Christ are "stewards of the mysteries of God", not the unholy mysteries connected with the heathen world by which the Corinthians were surrounded, but the precious truths of God, kept secret in Old Testament days, displayed in connection with Christ in glory, revealed by the Holy Spirit to the apostles, and received by believers. As the servants of Christ they

were the servants of One Whom the world had rejected, and as stewards of the mysteries of God they were stewards of things that the world, as such, could not possibly comprehend. Hence neither the ministers of Christ nor the stewards of God's mysteries could possibly be popular with the world.

(V. 2). The apostle proceeds to show that the great characteristic required in a steward is not cleverness, nor eloquence, nor popularity, but “faithfulness”. This is in accord with the Lord's own teaching, when He spoke of the “faithful and wise steward” (Luke 12: 42). Later, when near his end, the apostle can write to Timothy, “The things that thou hast heard of me . . . the same commit thou to faithful men” (2 Timothy 2: 2). Moreover, in this chapter he speaks of Timothy as being “faithful in the Lord” (verse 17). We, like the Corinthian saints, may at times value servants by their knowledge or their gifts; but their spiritual value in God's sight is measured by their faithfulness.

(Vv. 3-5). Moreover, the faithfulness is in relation to the One Who appoints. Hence the apostle can say, “It is the very smallest matter that I be examined of you or of man's day” (N.Tn.). He does not say that their judgment of him is no matter, but is of the least importance. Nor does he trust in his own examination of himself. He is not conscious of any wrong motive in himself, but this will not justify him from all unfaithfulness before the Lord, Who knows the secret counsels of the heart, and therefore can alone estimate the measure of faithfulness in each of His servants. This will not be known “until the Lord come”. Hence the true servant does not look for, or set great value upon, the approval of men. How often in the very things in which the saints praise us we may find the working of the flesh in some selfish motive for which we have to judge ourselves before the Lord. We are therefore to judge nothing before the time. Both the condemnation and praise of men may be equally at fault. At the coming of the Lord the stewardship of the servant will be appraised at its true value. “Then shall every man have praise of God”. This hardly implies that every man will be praised, but that every man that is praised will be praised “of God”. Men judge by the outward appearance; the Lord takes into account “the hidden things of darkness” and “the counsels of the heart”. How many an act that now has the appearance of great faithfulness may then be found to have been prompted by some unworthy motive!

It is well to note that, when the apostle exhorts us to “judge nothing before the time”, he is not speaking of the words or actions of the servants, but of their hidden motives. The apostle, in this very Epistle, very definitely judges, and condemns, many things that these Corinthian believers were both saying and doing. Other Scriptures clearly show that in the matter of fellowship, conduct and doctrine, the gifted servants, in common with all saints, are amenable to the discipline of the assembly, and that the assembly is responsible to judge in such matters.

Alas, have we not to admit that these exhortations have been entirely set aside in the great man-made systems of Christendom wherein the servants, instead of being appointed by Christ, are appointed by men or chosen by a congregation? The result has been that the mysteries of God have been almost wholly neglected, and the majority of servants has been more careful to retain popularity with men rather than maintain faithfulness to Christ.

(V. 6). These principles as to service and faithfulness the apostle had applied to himself and to Apollos to expose the abuse of gifted brothers in their midst without actually mentioning any names, thus avoiding all personalities. He would have us not to think of men above that which is written in the word of God, and thus avoid exalting one man above another.

(V. 7). Of those who might be seeking an undue position amongst the saints, he asks, “Who maketh thee to differ from another?”. If, by reason of a gift, the servant did in anywise differ from others, he had nothing but that which he had received. If a gift, it was given and not acquired by any merit. Where, then, was there ground for boasting? Unless near to the Lord and strong in His grace,

how weak is the most gifted servant! Unless the flesh is judged by the Cross, and the Spirit ungrieved, according to the teaching of 1 Cor. 1 and 1 Cor. 2, the servant, instead of using his gift in faithfulness to the Lord and for the blessing of His people, is in constant danger of seeking to use it to exalt himself.

(V. 8). To expose the folly of those who were seeking to exalt themselves by their gifts, the apostle draws a contrast between the present portion of the Corinthian assembly and the future portion of the faithful servant in the day of the Lord, of which he has been speaking. The “now” of verse 8 is in contrast to the “then” of verse 5. The Corinthian believers were seeking the praise of men “now” in the time and place of Christ’s rejection. The faithful servant will have the praise of God “then” in the day of Christ’s glory. They had sought to use Christianity to enrich themselves and reign as kings; but, says the apostle, it is “without us”. He would that the reigning time had come, but we are still in the world from which Christ has been rejected, and by which He was nailed to a Cross; evidently, then, it is neither the time nor the place for the followers of Christ to reign as kings. Christendom has fallen into this Corinthian snare, for on every hand professing Christians seek the favour of the world, attempt to direct its course and gain its applause.

(V. 9). The faithful follower of Christ will neither seek nor obtain power or praise in this world. His portion will be one of suffering and reproach “for Christ’s sake”, as exemplified in the life of the apostles, so touchingly set before us in the verses that follow. As far as this world is concerned, the portion of the apostles was much like that of the unhappy creatures which were appointed to death and kept for the last scene in the great Roman spectacles. The onlookers are not simply the holiday audience of an amphitheatre but the world, the angels and men. Well, indeed, for us to remember that the church is the lesson-book of “the principalities and powers in heavenly places” (Ephesians 3: 10).

As we read these verses, we learn how the world viewed these faithful followers of Christ, the trying circumstances through which they passed, and the way in which the world treated them.

(V. 10). The world viewed them as “fools” and “weak”, and consequently “despised” them. But they were content to be thought fools “for Christ’s sake”. Alas, too often, like the believers at Corinth, we may be tempted to use our knowledge of Christ to appear wise in the eyes of the world, and to obtain power and honour in the world.

(Vv. 11-13). As to circumstances, the Corinthians were “full” and “rich” (verse 8), but these devoted apostles had to face “hunger and thirst”. At times they were naked and buffeted by the storms of life. They had to “wander without a home” (N.Tn.), and labour, working with their own hands to meet their necessities. As to the treatment they received from the world, they were “reviled”, “persecuted” and “insulted”. Nevertheless, the treatment they received only served to draw out from them a witness to Christ, for, when reviled, they blessed, when persecuted, they patiently submitted, and when insulted, they entreated.

As far as this world is concerned, the apostle treated all its glories as loss and filth (Philippians 3: 8), while the world, on its side, treated the apostles as filth and the off-scouring of all things. How blessedly these servants followed in the steps of their Master, and, in their measure, shared in His sufferings from the hands of men. According to His perfect estimate of their faithfulness they will have His praise and share in His glories in the day to come.

(Vv. 14-16). This marvellous description of the power of Christianity, as set forth in the apostles, must have shamed the Corinthians, as, indeed, it shames us all. Nevertheless, the apostle does not write to shame them as enemies, but to warn them as beloved sons in the faith. They may have ten thousand instructors, but one father in Christ, so he beseeches them to be imitators of their father.

(V. 17). In order that they may be his imitators, the apostle has sent Timothy to remind them of his “ways which be in Christ”. If he desires us to imitate himself, it is only in as far as his ways are in Christ, so blessedly brought before us in the account he has just given of the life of faithful servants. Of Timothy he can also say that he has proved himself to be “faithful in the Lord”. Further, Timothy would witness that the apostle's “ways which be in Christ” were the same in every assembly. Men have introduced into their self-constituted systems ways according to their own ideas. For the one who bows to Scripture there are no other ways than those which the apostle taught “everywhere in every assembly”.

(Vv. 18-21). Alas, then as now “some are puffed up” and entirely indifferent to the inspired teaching of the apostle. As to such the apostle indicates that the real test of spirituality is not in the speech, but in the power of life. As far as speech is concerned, the apostle has to warn us a little later that we can speak like an angel and yet be nothing. The kingdom of God is not set forth by our words merely, but in what we are as manifested by spiritual power (1 Cor. 2: 4, 5). The apostle asks, how shall he come to them? Will it be with a rod to chasten, or in love and the spirit of meekness to edify? We may well ask, how would he come to Christendom today; how would he come to us?

1 Corinthians 5.

In 1 Cor. 3 and 4 the apostle has dealt with the strifes and divisions that existed in the assembly at Corinth. In the next section of his Epistle, comprising 1 Cor. 5 to 7, he treats of the great subject of holiness. In 1 Cor. 5 he speaks more especially of collective holiness, in 1 Cor. 6 of individual holiness, and in 1 Cor. 7 of holiness in the family relationships. He shows that collective holiness must be maintained by purging out the old leaven from the assembly and putting away a wicked person from amongst the saints, that individual holiness is maintained by self-judgment, and family holiness by the right use of the relationships established by God.

Already the apostle has reminded these saints that they are the temple of God, and, he says, “The Spirit of God dwelleth in you”. He then adds, “The temple of God is holy” (1 Cor. 3: 16, 17). The presence of God is intolerant of evil, and demands holiness. Whatever form the house of God may take, whether a material building as in days of old, or a spiritual building composed of believers, the first great and unchanging principle of God's house is holiness. As we read, “Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, for ever” (Psalm 93: 5). Ezekiel sets holiness as the great leading principle of God's house. “This”, says he, “is the law of the house; Upon the top of the mountain the whole limit thereof round about shall be most holy. Behold, this is the law of the house” (Ezekiel 43: 12).

(V. 1). The carnality of these believers was not only seen in that they ranged themselves under certain favourite teachers, thus making divisions, but it was further manifested in extreme laxity of morals. They were surrounded by the filthiness of heathenism, from which they had just emerged, and they had been used to think lightly of gross sins. Nevertheless, amongst them had occurred a case of unholiness of such a gross character that it would have shamed the heathen.

(V. 2). Moreover, there was not only this gross evil in their midst, but there was the tolerance of the evil-doer. Indeed they were puffed up rather than mourning. It is true that they had not received any apostolic directions how to deal with the offender, but spiritual instincts should at least have led them to humble themselves about the sin of this wicked person and desire his removal. We thus learn that, apart from distinct instructions involving definite responsibilities, there are the moral sensibilities of the new nature which should lead us to take a certain course. Cases may arise when a man's course becomes such an exercise to the saints that they desire his removal from their midst and yet have no

clear ground for action. In such cases this Scripture clearly indicates that we can spread the matter before the Lord and mourn before Him, with the assurance of His intervention in removing the troubler. The Lord, in such a case, does Himself what we ourselves may have to do when the case is clear. It may be well to note in this connection, that “taken away” in verse 2 and “put away” in verse 13 are similar words in the original. As one has said, “Humiliation and prayer are the resource of those who feel a wrong, and know not yet the remedy”.

(Vv. 3-5). The apostle proceeds to give them definite directions how to act in a proved case of public wickedness. He was absent in body but present in spirit, and had already judged as present, that when gathered together, according to the directions given by apostolic authority, and with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, to act in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, by delivering “such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus”. It is well to note carefully these directions and what they involve.

“When ye are gathered together” supposes the assembly in its normal condition, composed of all the saints in the locality, acting in the spirit which energised the apostle, and the power of the Lord Jesus with them. Gathered thus they would act as representing the Lord Jesus Christ in delivering such an one to Satan. This further supposes that outside the assembly there is the world dominated by Satan. The offender had behaved in such a way that he had proved himself unfit for the presence of the Lord, so was delivered over to Satan's sphere — outside the assembly. Even so, he was not looked at as an unbeliever, for it was for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

Today this could not be carried out as when things were normal. We could not deliver such an one unto Satan, for in the ruin of Christendom no company could say that outside their assembly there is nothing but Satan's world; and no company could claim to include all the saints in one locality. Nevertheless, the injunction at the end of the chapter still remains, “Put away from among yourselves that wicked person”. The result may, indeed, be that the wicked person comes under the power of Satan, to learn to judge the flesh in himself that he failed to judge when in the place of the power of Christ.

(V. 6-8). The apostle proceeds to show the solemn result of the moral insensibility that allowed unjudged evil in their midst. Evil is presented under the figure of leaven. As a little leaven permeates the whole lump, so known, unjudged evil in any assembly of Christians will affect the whole company. The whole lump leavened does not imply that the whole company becomes incestuous like the evildoer, but that all become defiled. Nothing more clearly condemns the false principle that known sin in the assembly concerns only the one directly guilty and does not involve all. It is not, therefore, enough to put away the wicked person; they must judge themselves for the low condition that could complacently tolerate evil. Thus they would purge out the old leaven and be in practice what they were in position before God in Christ, an unleavened lump as the result of the work of Christ.

We are thus exhorted to keep the feast, not with old leaven of indifference to sin, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with sincerity and truth. When the apostle says, “Let us keep the feast”, he is not referring exclusively to the Lord's Supper, but rather to the whole period of the believer's life on earth, of which the unleavened feast is a type.

(V. 9-13). In the verses that follow, the apostle shows that, in exhorting Christians to exercise holy discipline and live a life of sincerity and truth, he is referring to the Christian circle. To extend either to the man of the world would be unreal and impossible. If, however, one “called a brother” is living in open and unjudged sin, we are not to have company with him, or show any fellowship with

him by eating a meal with him. It is no business of the Christian to attempt to put the world right by judging its evil. This God will do in His own time. Our responsibility is to judge any evil that may manifest itself in the Christian company. “Therefore”, says the apostle, “put away from among yourselves that wicked person”.

1 Corinthians 6.

(V. 1). Having dealt with the unjudged immorality in their midst, the apostle now exposes the inconsistency of Christians going to law before worldly tribunals to settle disputes between brethren in things pertaining to this life. In plain language he reproves any brother, who has a matter against another brother, for daring to seek a legal settlement by the “unjust”, instead of appealing to the saints. In speaking of the world's tribunal as that of the “unjust”, he is viewing the men of this world in relation to God.

(V. 2). To show the inconsistency of this course, the apostle asks them to view their actions in the light of the world to come. They know that in that day the saints will be associated with Christ when He rules over the world and angels. How inconsistent, then, to seek the judgment of those whom we are going to judge.

(Vv. 3, 4). Further, he shows the futility of appealing to the world, for, if the saints are going to judge the world and angels, they must surely be capable of adjudicating in the comparatively small affairs of every-day life. This being so, if matters that pertain to this life arise between brothers, the least esteemed in the assembly are able to settle them, as they call for no great spirituality or gift, but rather common sense and honesty.

(Vv. 5, 6). If the apostle has to speak thus, it is really to their shame, for their going to law before the world would seem to prove that, in spite of all the knowledge and gifts in which they boasted, there was not amongst them a wise man able to settle these little matters, and so brother went to law with brother, and that before unbelievers. It is evident that the apostle is speaking of matters that need not be brought before the assembly, for they can be settled by “a wise man”.

(Vv. 7, 8). Having condemned this worldly procedure, the apostle now deals with the low moral state that led to such practices. As so often behind wrong practices there exists a wrong spirit and ignorance of divine principles. They were evidently not prepared to take wrong, or suffer wrong, for Christ's sake. On the contrary, in going to law with one another they did wrong and in result defrauded one another. Where, then, was the patience and suffering for well-doing? As one has said, “They came behind in no gift, and they came forward in no grace”, and again, “If I can keep Christ's character, I would rather do that than keep my cloak” (J.N.D.). We may show a good deal of temper and strong feeling when we fancy someone is over-charging us, and thus prove we are more ready to lose Christ's character than lose our coppers.

(Vv. 9-11). The apostle passes on to speak of the wrongs that provoked the law suits. He gives a solemn description of evil in its corruption, rather than its violence, which was rampant at Corinth, but which has no place in the kingdom of God. Having given this terrible list of the corruptions of the flesh, he says, “Such were some of you”. Wonderful grace that can take us up from the lowest place of degradation in the far country and associate us with Christ in the highest place of glory in the Father's house! Having lived in such conditions, these saints were in special danger of lapsing into old habits unless kept cleaving to Christ.

However sad the evils that needed to be dealt with, the apostle can still say, “But ye are washed,

but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified”. In saying they are washed, it is evident that the apostle is not referring to the constant need of the application of the word to remove all the daily defilements that put us out of touch with Christ, and which is set forth in figure by feet-washing. He refers rather to the work of the Spirit in new birth, which is done once for all, and by which is imparted a new nature that shrinks from the filth of the flesh.

Sanctification carries us further, for, if by washing we are set apart from the filth of the flesh, by sanctification we are set apart to God. Other Scriptures, such as John 17: 19 and I Thessalonians 5: 23, speak of the progressive sanctification by which the believer becomes increasingly devoted to the interests of God. Here, however, it is the absolute setting apart of the believer, of which we read in Hebrews 10: 10, “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*”. The stone, when once cut from the quarry, is set apart from it for ever, though afterwards it may be worked and carved to make it more fitted for the designer's purpose. By justification the soul has been cleared of all charge before God through the work of Christ. By the Holy Spirit these great truths are made good in our souls.

(Vv. 12-20). As we have a new nature, have been set apart for God, and justified from the guilt of our sins, the apostle, in the remaining verses of the chapter, reminds us that our bodies are for the Lord. On the one hand, therefore, let us beware of using them for the gratification of the flesh; on the other hand, let us use them for the glory of God (verse 20).

“All things” (and here he speaks of right things — food and natural relations) are lawful for the Christian, but even so we have to beware, for, though all may be lawful, it by no means follows that all things are expedient. There is the danger that in using right things we may come under the power of them. The apostle refers specially to meats. As meats are needed for the body and they are naturally suited the one to the other, we are at liberty to use meats. It is possible, however, to use meats and the body for self-indulgence and become a glutton.

The apostle then passes on to speak of that which is not lawful for the body — actual sin. Here we are reminded that the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. He reminds us, too, that these bodies are destined for high honour, for even as God hath raised up the Lord, so will He also raise up these bodies by His own power. Moreover, our bodies are members of Christ, and he that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. The apostle learnt something of this great truth at his conversion, for the Lord said to him, “Why persecutest thou Me?”. To touch the bodies of the saints was to touch Christ. How solemn is all sin, but how specially solemn is sin against the body which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit and belongs to God, and which it is our privilege and responsibility to use for the glory of God. To press upon us the deep importance of holiness, the apostle re-minds us in the course of the chapter that we are washed, sanctified and justified, and, further, that our bodies are for the Lord, joined to the Lord, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, belong to God, and are to be used for the glory of God; and, too, the Lord is for the body, and God will raise it up by His power.

1 Corinthians 7.

(Vv. 1, 2). Having exhorted the saints to maintain holiness in the assembly (1 Cor. 5) and individual holiness (1 Cor. 6), the apostle now instructs us to maintain holiness in the natural relationships of life. Christianity by no means sets aside the order of nature, though it will correct the abuses by which fallen man may have corrupted these relationships. Every man is at liberty to have his own wife, and every woman her own husband, and indeed this is a legitimate way to avoid the temptation to unholiness. The spurious pretension to higher spirituality by insisting upon asceticism is

thus entirely condemned.

(Vv. 3-5). The apostle gives his advice to those in the married state. The relationship is to be taken up with due consideration for each other as being mutually dependent upon each other.

(Vv. 6-9). In having said, "Let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband", he is careful to explain that he is not giving a command, but he speaks as consenting to the married state. His own wish is that all should be as he himself, free from these relationships. But he recognises that it is not given of God for all to remain unmarried, and where not given it is "better to marry".

(Vv. 10, 11). To the married he gives, not simply his counsel, but the direct ruling of the Lord. The wife is not to depart from the husband. If she shall have been separated, she is to remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. Let not the husband put away his wife.

(Vv. 12-17). The apostle then takes up the difficult position of a brother with an unbelieving wife, or the woman with an unbelieving husband. Here he gives his advice. This does not contemplate for a moment the case of a believer marrying an unbeliever, which is clearly contrary to the mind of the Lord (2 Cor. 6: 14). Here it is the case of mixed marriages, where one of the parties has been converted after the marriage. In this case the believer is not defiled by union with the unbeliever. On the contrary the unbeliever is sanctified and the children holy. Here the sanctification and the holiness do not signify a spiritual condition that puts them in relationship with God, but rather that through the believer the relationship is clean and owned of God, so that the believer can continue in it. If, however, the unbeliever departs, the believer is released from the bondage of being tied to an unbeliever and is not to raise any dispute with the one that has departed, for we are called to peace. This does not give the believer any licence to break the tie by departing from the unbeliever, nor does it grant the abandoned believer permission to remarry. So far from the believer separating from the unbeliever, the brother or sister is to remain at all cost in the relationship, counting upon God for the salvation of the unbeliever. There will thus be submission to what the Lord has allowed, and a walk in accord with His will. This, too, we are reminded, is the order for all the assemblies; thus ecclesiastical independency is shut out. The assemblies are not independent companies, each left free to adopt its own practices. The word of God is still our only guide, and assemblies walking in the light of the word will be united in submitting to its instructions.

(Vv. 18, 19). The apostle has spoken of the call of God having come to a believer when linked with an unbeliever. He now speaks of the call coming to a believer when circumcised or uncircumcised. We know that Jewish training led some to set great value on the rite of circumcision, even going so far as to say that apart from circumcision Gentile believers could not be saved (Acts 15: 1). Here the apostle states that, for the Christian, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any value. Obedience to the word of God is of value in His sight, not mere religious distinctions in the flesh.

(Vv. 20-24). Then the apostle passes on to speak of the call of God coming to believers in different social positions. Again we learn that, as circumcision or uncircumcision has nothing to do with our call as Christians, so the social position as a slave or a freeman has nothing to say to the Christian call. As a general rule, therefore, let every man abide in the position in which he is called. He need not be concerned as to being a bondman. If, however, he can become free, so much the better. In any case let the Christian bondman remember that he is the Lord's freeman, and the freeman that he is Christ's bondman. Both have been bought with a price, and the One Who has bought us with the price of His precious blood has the first claim upon us. Thus, while we are exhorted to abide in our calling,

either as bondmen or freemen, it is to be “with God”. This surely indicates that, though it may be right to remain a slave, it would not be right to continue in some dishonest trade in which it would be impossible to be “with God”.

(Vv. 25-34). The apostle has spoken to those called in the marriage relationship; now he gives his advice to the unmarried. On account of the present condition of the world in all its distresses and necessities, and that the time is short, and its weeping and rejoicing will soon be over — for the fashion of this world is passing — he judges that it is good for a Christian to be free from earthly ties. This, however, does not mean that if a man is bound to a wife he is to seek to be free, but if free it is better to remain so. Nevertheless, Christians who enter upon the married state do no wrong, but they will have trouble in the flesh and add to their cares. The apostle would, as far as possible, have us without care, so that we might undistractedly serve the Lord. Naturally, and so far rightly, the married seek to please each other, whereas the unmarried are more free to serve the Lord undistractedly in spirit and in body.

(Vv. 35-40). In thus speaking the apostle has our profit in view. He has no wish to cast a snare before us that may lead us into the delusion of being monks or nuns, which has led to so much corruption in a large part of professing Christendom. He leaves all free to marry, and adds a word as to the widow, about whom a question may arise, that she is free to marry — only let it be “in the Lord”. But he judges that he has the mind of the Lord in thinking she would be happier to remain free.

1 Corinthians 8.

In chapters 8, 9 and 10 the apostle firmly maintains the liberty of the individual, while solemnly warning against its abuse. In 1 Cor. 8 we are warned against using liberty in a way that may *stumble our brother*; in 1 Cor. 9 the servant is warned that it is possible to use liberty to *his own condemnation*; in 1 Cor. 10 we are warned against using liberty in a way that may *compromise our fellowship*, and give offence to Jews or Gentiles or the assembly of God.

(Vv. 1-3). In chapter 1 Cor. 8 the apostle opens this important theme by bringing before us the danger of turning the liberty of the individual into licence to act in self-will without considering the effect of our acts upon others. It is thus possible for a Christian's liberty to become an occasion of stumbling his brother. The apostle presses home his warning by referring to the matter of eating meats offered to idols. Individual believers at Corinth, knowing that an idol was nothing, might personally feel quite free to go into the idol temple and eat meats offered to idols. But this raises the question, would it be right to do so if it were to stumble a brother? The apostle first shows that this is one of the important questions that cannot be answered by mere *knowledge*, but can very quickly be settled by love. This is of the first importance, for while the principle is here applied to the particular question of eating things sacrificed to idols, it has a wide application. In our day we should not in this country be faced with the question of eating meats offered to idols, yet many other questions may arise — for instance the question of a Christian smoking. Some would seek to settle such a question by knowledge that thinks only of the harmful effects it may have on the body, but the better way to settle such a question is by love, which asks, “What effect will it have upon my brother?” Knowledge occupies me with the thing in question — its merits or demerits — but love thinks of my brother.

This leads the apostle to make some important remarks on *knowledge* and *love*. First, he says, “We all have knowledge”, in measure at any rate. Knowledge, however, is not enough; we need love as well. There is in human nature a great thirst for knowledge, but if I pursue knowledge for the sake of acquiring knowledge, it will only puff me up, whereas love will build up my brother. Moreover, we only know in part; therefore to trust in our *partial* knowledge to settle questions will often lead us sadly

astray.

Love to my brother, which thinks of his good, will be a surer and better way of settling questions which may otherwise only minister to self and self-importance.

But how is this love to my brother to be kept in activity? Only by love to God, as the apostle John tells us, “Every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him”. So in this passage the apostle speaks of love to God, and reminds us that if a man loves God he realises, not simply that he knows God in some little measure, but that he is known of God. The consciousness that God knows me, and all that I have done, leaves no room for the pride which would be puffed up by mere knowledge.

(Vv. 4-6). Further, the question of eating meats offered to idols leads the apostle to draw a brief but important contrast between idols and the true God. First, he says that we Christians know that an idol is nothing, and that there is none other God but one. Fallen man imagines many gods and many lords in heaven and on earth; but to us Christians there is but “one God, the Father” and “one Lord, Jesus Christ”. Here it is no question of bringing before us the Deity of Christ, but of how God has been pleased to reveal Himself, and the place the divine Persons hold in the ways of grace toward men. The Father remains in Godhead, and God is the source of all, and all for Him. The Son, while never ceasing to be God, has become flesh, and, in Manhood, has taken the place of Lord. Thus the One we know as Jesus Christ is the one Lord to Whom we all owe allegiance and subjection. He is both Creator of all things and the One by Whom we have been redeemed.

(Vv. 7-13). Having spoken of the difference between love and knowledge, and having brought before us the true God, the apostle now shows that even among true Christians there were some who had not this full knowledge, and they were therefore not able with their partial knowledge to rise above the deeply rooted prejudices of their heathen training in regard to idols. They were apparently not altogether assured that idols were non-entities, and the meats offered to them no different from other meats. For such to eat of meats offered to idols would lead to a bad or defiled conscience. Moreover, if such an one saw a brother eating idol sacrifices, it might become a stumbling-block to him, and embolden him to do something which would give him a bad conscience, leading to his making shipwreck of the faith and the start on a path that ends in perishing. This does not raise the question of the possibility of a believer perishing, for the Lord Himself says, “They shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand”. In one passage the believer is viewed from the Lord's side; in the other from man's. We may fail in our responsibility, and do that which, as far as we are concerned, would cause our brother to perish. In so acting, we not only wrong our brother for whom Christ died, but we wrong Christ. The apostle concludes, therefore, that love to my brother would lead me not to eat flesh, if, by so eating, my brother is stumbled.

1 Corinthians 9.

Having in the previous chapter maintained the liberty of the believer in the use of meats, and warned us against its abuse, the apostle in this chapter passes on to speak of the liberty and rights of the servants of the Lord, and again warns against any abuse of these privileges. But, while establishing the rights of the Lord's servants in such matters, he establishes the important principle that such rights are subservient to the interests of Christ and His people, and not for self-glorification or the indulgence of the body.

(Vv. 1, 2). We know from the Second Epistle that some were calling in question the apostleship

of Paul, so he opens this portion of his letter by briefly asserting his apostleship, as well as his liberty. He had the outstanding mark of an apostle, for he had seen “Jesus Christ, our Lord”. Moreover, how could the Corinthians have any doubt as to his apostleship, for were they not the seal and proof of it, as their existence as an assembly was the outcome of his “work in the Lord”? There were those who, in their jealousy of the apostle, were ready to suggest that he preached from interested motives, seeking to make a gain out of his service (2 Cor. 11: 9-12). The apostle answers such suggestions, first, by asserting the rights of the servant (verses 3-14) and, secondly, by showing the way in which he had used these rights (verses 15-27).

(Vv. 3-7). As to the rights of the servant of the Lord, Paul, in common with other apostles, had a perfect right to partake of the ordinary mercies of the present life, a right to eat and drink, a right to lead about a sister as wife, a right to forbear working with his own hands. Moreover, he had a right to receive help in “carnal things” in return for his ministry in “spiritual things”. That this is so nature and common sense would show, for, asks the apostle, “Who ever carries on war at his own charges? who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? or who herds a flock, and does not eat of the milk of the flock?” (N.Tn.).

(Vv. 8-11). Further, not only nature but Scripture affirms these rights, “For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn”. In speaking thus God is not thinking only of the oxen. For our sakes it is written to teach us that, if the plougher and the thresher benefit by their labours, so the servants of the Lord, if they have sown “spiritual things”, have a perfect right to receive in return “carnal things”.

(V. 12). If others availed themselves of this right to take of their carnal things, how much more could the apostle, who had served them so faithfully? If he refrained from taking of their carnal things, it was no proof that he was not an apostle, nor that he had no right to receive from them, but rather that he judged, in their case, the interests of the gospel of Christ would best be served by his suffering “all things”, rather than by taking of their “carnal things”. In his service the apostle was not governed by the thought of gain, but by the interests of Christ and His gospel.

(Vv. 13, 14). Nevertheless, the rights of the servant remained, according to the typical teaching of the service in connection with the temple and its altar. Above all, the apostle asserts that these rights are according to that which the Lord has ordained, “that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel”. Whether it was nature (verse 7), or Scripture (verses 9, 10), or the direct ordinance of the Lord (verses 13, 14), all concur in maintaining the rights of the one ministering in spiritual things to receive the carnal things of the saints.

(V. 15). Having carefully asserted the rights of the servant, the apostle, in the remaining verses of the chapter, shows how he personally had used his rights in the assembly at Corinth. He had turned them into an occasion for sacrificing himself in the interests of Christ and His gospel. As one has said, “This privilege is transformed in his hands into another kind of privilege altogether; that is the privilege of sacrificing himself for Christ and for His service”. He gave up one privilege to enjoy a higher privilege. He can thus say, “I have used none of these things”. Nor did he write this letter to seek from them any help in temporal things. He would not receive help from them and thus allow any man to make void his glorying in this respect.

(Vv. 16, 17). If, however, he speaks of glorying, he is at once careful to state that he was not seeking to glorify himself because he preached the gospel, but did so freely. An administration had been committed to him to preach, and, whether he did so willingly or not, he was responsible to carry out the work entrusted to him. His reward would not be for doing his appointed work, but for doing it

willingly.

(V. 18). What, then, was his reward? This — that in preaching the gospel he gave up his rights, so that the gospel might be “*without charge*”. He did not use his rights as belonging to him, to be used according to his own will, without regard to the directions of the Lord. It may be well to note that the word “abuse”, used in this passage and also in 1 Cor. 7: 31, has in neither case the meaning with which we generally use the word. The force of the word is “to use as one that has possession of a thing”, or a person “using it as he likes, as his own” (J.N.D.). The apostle was sent by the Lord to preach, and it was ordained by the Lord that he had a right to be supported. He did not, however, use this right as if it were a possession that he could use as he liked. He thought of Christ and His glory, and so used, or refrained from the use of, this right according as he judged he had the mind of the Lord in carrying out his service in a way that would be best for the glory of Christ.

(Vv. 19-23). Thus, entirely free from all, he used his freedom to become the servant of all. When preaching to the Jews he could meet them on their own ground, adapt himself to their modes of thought, and avoid wounding their scruples. With those under law he could appeal to them as entering into all their exercises as one under law, though he is careful to add, “not being myself under law” (N.Tn.). As to those without law, he could appeal to them on their ground, though again he guards himself by saying that he was “not as without law to God, but as legitimately subject to Christ” (N.Tn.). To the weak he could become as one weak. He was made all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. Moreover, he acted thus for the sake of the glad tidings, which he personifies when he says, “that I may be fellow-partaker with them” (N.Tn.).

(Vv. 24-27). In his thus speaking it must not be inferred that the apostle accommodated himself to the world in order to escape reproach and spare the flesh. To dispel any such misconception, the apostle shows in the closing verses that the path of service is one of self-denial. There is, indeed, a reward for service far better than the prize to be obtained in the world's games; there they run for a corruptible crown, but the Christian for an incorruptible. Nevertheless, if to obtain an earthly crown requires a temperate life, how much more necessary it is to be temperate in all things to obtain the incorruptible crown. The apostle ran with no uncertainty as to the glorious end of the path. The conflict for him was no mere trifling, like beating the air. He was careful not to indulge the body, but rather to keep it in subjection, that it might be no hindrance to him in his service. The saints at Corinth were boasting in their gifts and seeking their ease (1 Cor. 4: 6-8). Let us beware of preaching without practice, for the apostle warns us that it is possible to preach and yet be a castaway. We know that the believer will never perish, and the apostle does not say it is possible to be born again, or converted, and be a castaway. Preaching to others is not everything. First we must be a Christian and then a preacher, if called of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 10 - 11: 1.

In the tenth chapter the apostle first warns us that it is possible to make a profession of Christianity by having part in Christian ordinances and yet perish. He then gives us the true significance of the cup and the loaf, of which we partake at the Lord's Supper, and closes by warning us against using our individual liberty in a way that would compromise Christian fellowship or give offence to the Jews, the Gentiles or the assembly of God.

(Vv. 1-5). Already the apostle has warned *preachers* that it is possible to preach and be a castaway; now he warns *professors* that it is possible to be baptized and partake of the Lord's Supper and yet be lost. He does not say that we can have part in the death of Christ and perish, but that it is

possible to have part in the symbols of His death and perish. He thus exposes the snare, into which the great mass in Christendom has fallen, of making a sacramental system in which salvation is made to depend upon having part in baptism and the Lord's Supper. To illustrate this solemn fact, the apostle refers to the history of Israel. He reminds us that all Israel were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and that all ate of the manna and partook of the water that flowed from the rock, things which in figure spoke of Christ. Nevertheless, with "the most of them" (N.Tn.) God was not well pleased, and they were overthrown in the wilderness.

(Vv. 6-11). Now, says the apostle, these things happened as examples. Evidently they set forth in type the initiatory rite of Christianity — baptism — as well as the continuous rite of the Lord's Supper. However important these rites, they do not impart life to the participants. Alas, it is possible to have part in them, and yet live in a way that calls down the displeasure of God. The participators may thus prove themselves to be mere professors and in the end perish.

To warn us against this danger, the apostle reminds us of the evils into which many in Israel fell, to the intent that we should not act as they did. First, they lusted after evil things of this world and wearied of the heavenly provision (Numbers 11: 4-6). Secondly, yielding to these lusts, they allowed the things of sight and sense to come between their souls and God, fell into idolatry, and abandoned themselves to the gratification of their lusts; "The people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play" (Exodus 32: 1-6). Thirdly, having turned from God, they fell into gross sins in unholy alliance with the world, and came under the judgment of God (Numbers 25: 1-9). Fourthly, this unholy alliance with the world destroyed all sense of the presence of the Lord. They tempted the Lord to prove His presence by saying, "Is the Lord among us, or not?" (Ex. 17: 7). This speaking against God led to a solemn proof of His presence by His dealings in judgment (Num. 21: 5, 6). Fifthly, they murmured against God's way with them and fell under the power of their enemies (Num. 14: 2-4, 45).

The order in which these evils are stated is evidently moral and not historical. Lust heads the list, for, as the apostle James tells us, "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (James 1: 15). It leads to idolatry, for that which we lust after becomes an idol between the soul and God. Then, through the idol, an unholy alliance is formed with the world, which in turn destroys all sense of the presence of God with His people, and leads to murmuring or rebellion against the ways of God by which He may chasten men because of their evil ways.

These evils brought down the judgment of God upon the Israelites. "They were *overthrown*"; they "*fell*"; they "*were destroyed of serpents*"; they were "*destroyed of the destroyer*". Further, the things that happened to them are types for us, warning us not to act as they did, lest while partaking of the Christian rites we give way to lust and fall under the power of sin and Satan and death.

(Vv. 12-14). The apostle, in searching words, proceeds to apply these warnings to professing Christians. He warns us against the natural self-confidence of the flesh; "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall". Let us not think that, because we have partaken of the Supper, we are safe from falling into the grossest sins. But, we are reminded, God is our resource. The temptations that come upon us are common to man, and God never allows us to be tempted without making a way of escape, though, alas, we may neglect the way. "Wherefore", says the apostle, "flee from idolatry". Avoid all that would stir up lust, come between the soul and God, and lead to an outward fall.

(Vv. 15-17). Having warned us against the abuse of Christian ordinances, the apostle sets before us the true significance of the symbols, the cup and the loaf, in the Lord's Supper. For us the cup is a "cup of blessing", a symbol of the blood of Christ, reminding us of His death, when the blood that cleanseth from all sin was shed at the Cross. For Him it was a cup of judgment, but the cup that brought

judgment to Him secures blessing for us. The cup of judgment for Christ thus becomes a cup of blessing for the believer. For this cup we can bless, or give thanks. In speaking of blessing the cup, there is no thought of an individual consecrating the elements according to the ideas of corrupt Christendom. The apostle says, “we” bless, “we” break, and “we” partake. It is an act of thanksgiving in which all who partake have their part.

In partaking of the loaf we express two great truths. First, in the broken loaf — “the bread which we break” — we set forth the great truth that we have part in Christ's death, His body given for us. Secondly, in the unbroken loaf we have a symbol of the mystical body of Christ, which includes every true believer, and, in partaking of the “one bread”, we set forth our identification with the one body of which Christ is the Head and all believers members. The “one bread” does not only set forth that those who at any given time partake of the bread are one, nor that believers in any particular locality are one, but it sets forth the unity of the whole body which includes every true believer.

(Vv. 18-22). Having set forth the deep significance of the cup and the loaf, the apostle warns us against having any part in human fellowships which are set aside, or condemned, by the death of Christ. He first alludes to Israel to establish the important principle that, by partaking of a sacrifice, we express communion with all that it sets forth. This makes it so intensely solemn for a Christian to have part with anything that expresses fellowship with idols. The Corinthian believers knew that the idols themselves were nothing, and the meats offered to idols were no different from other meats; they were therefore in danger of arguing that they could attend a heathen temple and eat meats offered to idols. No, says the apostle, you forget that the things they sacrifice to idols are really sacrificed to demons, who are the instigators of this idol worship. The idol may, indeed, be a mere nonentity, but the demons behind them were very real, and in leading men to worship idols they were leading men to worship demons, and thus usurp the homage due to God alone. How, then, could the Christian, who by drinking of the cup of the Lord expressed fellowship with the Lord, His death, and His people, dare to drink of a cup that expressed fellowship with demons? If we sit down at the Lord's table, where He presides, and partake of the blessings that He provides, how can we partake in the evils that demons may provide for the gratification of the flesh at their table? The Lord is surely jealous lest the affections of His people be drawn away from Himself to another. Can a believer who has wandered in affection from the Lord with impunity ignore the Lord? Are we stronger than He? Let us beware of provoking the Lord to act in governmental dealings with us, as God had to do with Israel.

(Vv. 23-11: 1). Having warned us against every idolatrous fellowship, the apostle meets questions that may arise as to eating meats apart from the idol's temple. Difficulties may arise in the markets, or at feasts in private houses, where meats that have been offered to idols may be sold or served. In such cases let each remember that, if all things are lawful, it by no means follows that all things are expedient, and that we have to consider what will be for the edification and advantage of others. In the markets, or at the feasts, we need ask no questions, as we can partake of food as being the Lord's and His provision. If, however, it is pointed out that the meats have been sacrificed to idols, then the Christian should refrain from eating for the sake of a believer who has a conscience about it, and to prevent an unbeliever bringing the charge that believers eat of meats offered to the very idols they condemn.

In eating or drinking, therefore, as in all else that we do, we are to consider, not merely ourselves and our liberty, but “the glory of God”, and the consciences of our brethren, and thus avoid giving offence to Jews, or Gentiles, or the assembly of God. Further, we are not only to avoid giving offence to any, but we are to follow the apostle, even as he pleased all men in all things, seeking not his own profit, “but that of the many, that they may be saved”. And how did he seek to “please all”? Not, we

may be sure, by associating with their evils, but by following Christ in all His lowly grace. The apostle can thus conclude this portion of his Epistle with the exhortation, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”.

1 Corinthians 11.

Chapters 11 to 14 contain instruction of the deepest importance to the people of God throughout the Christian period, inasmuch as they contemplate believers when gathered together in one place in any locality, and set before us God's order for such gatherings.

Amidst the confusion of Christendom, in which God's order has been so largely set aside by human order, it is the greatest mercy that we have an inspired record of God's mind for His people when come together. In our refusing all association with any form of gathering which sets aside God's order, it is still possible, by following the apostolic directions, to meet in humble obedience to God's word, and thus according to the simplicity of divine order.

A reference to 1 Cor. 11: 17, 18, 20, 33, 34 and 1 Cor. 14: 23, 26, 28, 34, 35 will make it very clear that these chapters contemplate the people of God when assembled together in any given locality.

First, in 1 Cor. 11: 1-16 we are instructed as to God's order in creation as a necessary introduction to God's order in the assembly.

Secondly, in 1 Cor. 11: 17-34 we learn that the Lord Himself is the great rallying centre for His people, and that the highest motive that can gather God's people together is the remembrance of Himself in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. We are instructed as to the condition and conduct suited to this holy occasion.

Thirdly, in 1 Cor. 12 we are instructed as to the sovereign action of the Holy Spirit in distributing gifts in the body of Christ, “to every man severally as He will”, and that our gathering together is governed by the great fact that believers are members of the body of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the power for all ministry.

Fourthly, in 1 Cor. 13 we learn that the spirit which animates the body of Christ is love, the spring of all true ministry.

Fifthly, in 1 Cor. 14 we are instructed as to the exercise of ministry in the assembly, so that all may be in love, to edification, and according to divine order.

Following upon the instructions in the early part of the Epistle that guide us as to our individual conduct, we have instructions as to God's order in creation to set us in right relations with one another as men and women, thus preparing us to take our place rightly in relation to one another in the assembly.

(V. 2). According to the grace that delights to recognise all that is of God in the saints, the apostle opens this fresh division of the Epistle with a word of praise. While there was so much in the assembly to condemn, the apostle can at least praise them that in all their questions they remembered him, and kept the ordinances, or “directions”, delivered to them.

(V. 3). With this word of approval the apostle passes on to give directions which would imply that another grave disorder existed among believers at Corinth. Women were apparently getting out of their true place of subjection, while men were yielding their place of authority.

To correct this disorder the apostle takes a way often adopted in Scripture to settle questions. In

order to learn the principles involved in any question or difficulty, we are taken back to the first occasion of the principles being set forth. Here, a question having arisen as to the relative position of men and women, we are taken back to the order first established in creation. It is true that in Christ — in the new creation — “there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female”. In the old creation, as in the assembly, these distinctions still exist. Christianity, however great the common privileges it confers, does not set aside the order of creation, and, while in these mortal bodies in a scene where these differences exist, the Christian is responsible to observe this order.

The apostle asserts, as the first great truth in connection with creation, that “the Head of every man is Christ”. Here there is no reference to the Headship of Christ in relation to the church. It asserts that Christ, having become a Man and entered the scene of creation, necessarily takes the place of pre-eminence and authority over man. Moreover, “the head of the woman is the man; and the Head of Christ is God”. This latter assertion does not in anywise detract from the Deity of the Son. It is no question in this passage of Christ's place in the Godhead, but of the place He has taken in creation. This, then, is the simple and beautiful order of creation. The head of the woman is man; the Head of man is Christ; and the Head of Christ is God.

The source of all the lawlessness, disorder and consequent misery in this present world can be traced to the fall, when the woman was beguiled from her place of subjection to the man, and man failed in his place of authority over woman. In the creation order both the man and the woman have failed; but Christ has come into the creation scene, and with Him there is, and can be, no failure. From beginning to end of His wonderful path He was the perfectly subject Man, ever doing the will of God, even to death. While the failure of man has filled the scene with lawlessness and misery, the perfection of Christ will bring order and blessing to those who submit to Him as Head, and at last will introduce the new heavens and the new earth when God will be all in all.

In the Christian circle the blessing of the creation order should be enjoyed. If the woman were in subjection to the man, and the man were exercising right authority over the woman, *as himself subject to Christ*, the One Who, as Man, is perfectly subject to God, there would be order instead of confusion, and dependence upon each another instead of lawlessness.

(Vv. 4-6). The apostle proceeds to show the bearing of this creation order upon Christian men and women. He refers to the exercise of prayer and prophecy, in which, on the one hand, we speak to God on behalf of ourselves or others, and, on the other hand, we speak to men on behalf of God. In connection with praying or prophesying he speaks of the woman's head being covered as a sign of subjection, and the man's head uncovered as a sign of authority. If the man prays or prophesies with his head covered, he dishonours himself, for he professes to go to God in prayer for others, or to speak to men as from God, and at the same time he abandons the place of authority that God has given him. Under such circumstances can he wonder if neither God nor man will listen to him? As to the woman, if she prays or prophesies with her head uncovered, she professes to express her place of dependence upon God, or to come from God, and at the same time she is abandoning the place of subjection in which God has placed her. In either case they have dishonoured themselves, for every one out of his place is dishonoured before God. The uncovered woman is practically taking the place of a man who has his head shaven. The fact that it is a shame for a woman to have her head shaven should in itself teach her to be covered.

(V. 7). The apostle then gives us the reason for the creation order. Man was set in the creation to exercise dominion as the representative of God on the earth, and, as such, it was his responsibility to maintain authority. In carrying out his responsibility he would glorify God. The woman, in keeping her

place of subjection, would be for the glory of the man.

(Vv. 8-10). The apostle reminds us that the woman was *of* the man and *for* the man. For this cause the woman should wear on her head that which is the sign that there is authority over her, so that there should be a testimony rendered, not only before men, but before the angels who are the interested spectators of God's order in creation, as well as the wisdom of His ways in the church. (See 1 Cor. 4: 9; Ephesians 3: 10.)

(Vv. 11, 12). Nevertheless, this question of authority and subjection in the creation order by no means weakens the fact that the man and the woman are dependent upon each another, a mutual dependence, however, that is to be taken up in the Lord. In the world men and women are throwing off their allegiance to God, and therefore increasingly seeking to be independent of one another. In Christianity we are brought back to dependence upon the Lord, and therefore upon one another, and to recognise that all things are of God. How can we be independent of the One from Whom we have our origin?

(Vv. 13-15). The apostle, having asserted the creation order, now appeals to nature, therein to learn what is comely. Inasmuch as, in her long hair, the woman has a natural covering, nature indicates her place of subjection, and tells us that a hidden woman is a beautiful woman, while a woman who cuts off her hair and apes the man is held in contempt by all. Even so, the man with long hair brings shame upon himself.

(V. 16). Finally, the apostle can appeal to custom. If any man is contentious, he is alone in a judgment that is contrary to the custom of the assemblies of God. Thus even custom, when no principle is concerned, can be invoked for the maintenance of order. Contempt of custom may indicate, as another has said, "neither conscience nor spirituality, but a fleshly love of differing from others, and at bottom sheer vanity".

The apostle has thus spoken of what is true in creation (verses 3-10), of what is right "in the Lord" (verses 11, 12), of what is comely according to nature (verses 13-15), and what is allowed according to custom (verse 16), in order to show the true position of men and women in relation to one another.

In the portion that follows, the apostle passes on to speak of the maintenance of God's order when the people of God come together in assembly, for which the creation order has prepared us.

(V. 17). Alas, such grave disorder existed in the assembly at Corinth that the feast of remembrance, which should have been for their blessing, had become the occasion for bringing the governmental dealings of God upon them. Their coming together was not for the better, but for the worse.

(Vv. 18, 19). First, the coming together in assembly, instead of expressing their unity, as members of the one body, as set forth in the one loaf, only manifested the spirit of division that existed among them. There were divisions (or "schisms") amongst them, which were leading to heresies (or "sects") being formed in the assembly. The two words are distinct, conveying different ideas. The division, or schism (Gk. *schisma*), is a difference of opinion, thought and feeling existing within the assembly. A heresy (Gk. *hairesis*) is a sect, or party, formed among the saints to maintain a particular opinion, or to follow a chosen teacher. At Corinth both apparently existed within the assembly; but division or schism within, if unjudged, will soon lead to a heresy or sect without, or even the entire breaking up of the assembly into different sects. The condition of the assembly had apparently become so bad that God had allowed these divisions to work out into sects or parties, in order to make manifest

those who stood for the truth, here called “the approved”. The evil had reached such a pass that there was no other way of maintaining a witness for the truth. It was necessary to allow the evil to declare itself, so that the truth might be made manifest. (Compare Titus 3: 10, where the heretic is to be rejected.)

(Vv. 20-22). When they came together, it was professedly to eat the Lord's Supper; practically it was to indulge in a feast of their own. The apostle says, “Each one in eating takes *his own supper*”. The Supper was instituted by the Lord at the end of the paschal feast. The Corinthians, apparently taking this as their example, came together for a preliminary social feast, at the end of which they partook of the Lord's Supper. Moreover, at this preliminary feast the poor were allowed to go hungry, while some were drinking to excess. But, apart from these excesses, the assembly was no place for social feasting. “Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?”, asks the apostle; or were they putting to shame the poor, and despising the assembly of God, which embraces rich and poor? For the second time the apostle has to say, “I praise you not”. That they remembered the apostle and heeded his directions called forth his praise. For their divisions and abuse of the Lord's Supper he can only condemn them. They introduced into the assembly the social element which led to social distinctions and fleshly indulgence. Their coming together was thus a practical denial both of the Lord's Supper and the assembly of God.

(V. 23). To correct these scandals, the apostle brings forward the truth of the Supper as instituted by the Lord and revealed to him. It has been pointed out that the apostle had no special revelation as to baptism, which is an individual matter. With the Supper are found all the great truths connected with the one body that were specially given to Paul to make known. Although the Supper was given to the Twelve, it was not from them that Paul received his knowledge, but by special revelation from the Lord to be delivered to the Gentile believers. The apostle reminds us of the touching circumstances under which the Lord instituted the Supper. It was “the same night in which He was betrayed”. The very night on which the evil of man rose to its height the unselfish love of Christ was most blessedly displayed. When lust led to the betrayal, love instituted the Supper.

(Vv. 24, 25). No mystery surrounds this feast such as men delight to import into it. All is simplicity. It is the simple, but touching, memorial of the death of Christ. The bread speaks of His body — Himself. The cup speaks of His blood — His work. The symbols of the body and the blood are separate, speaking of a dead Christ. Both the bread and the cup were to be taken, said the Lord, “in remembrance of Me”. This gives the Supper its distinctive character; it is a Supper of remembrance, not a celebration of something existing at the moment, but a remembrance of something in the past. One has said, “The Lord's Supper is to remind us of Christ, of His death; not of our sins, but of our sins remitted and ourselves loved”. The cup is the new covenant in Christ's blood; not the old covenant sealed with the blood of bulls and goats, but the new covenant with all its blessings secured by the blood of Christ, a covenant that makes God known in grace, and in which sins are remembered no more.

(V. 26). In eating and drinking we “show the Lord's death till He come”, words which rebuke those who from any cause argue for its disuse. The feast is never to be set aside until He comes.

(V. 27). Having reminded the brethren of the true character of the Supper, the apostle returns to the scandals that existed in their midst, and warns them against partaking of the Supper in an unworthy manner. They were eating unworthily inasmuch as they were taking the Supper without judging their ways, and without discerning that of which the bread and the cup speak — the Lord's body and blood. They did not discern between an ordinary meal and that which was a memorial of the Lord's body given for us and His blood shed for us.

(Vv. 28, 29). To correct their unworthy ways, the apostle exhorts that each one should prove himself, and so let him eat. The proving, or self-judgment, of everything inconsistent with the death of Christ, is an individual act. Having proved himself, he is not to refrain from the Supper; on the contrary, the word is, “let him eat”. We are thus warned against partaking in an unworthy *manner*. In this verse the word “Lord” should be omitted. The reference is probably to the one body of which all Christians are members, while in verse 27 the Lord's actual body is in view. We must remember that the disorders at Corinth were setting aside both the Lord's Supper and the assembly (verses 20, 22).

(Vv. 30-32). The disorders existing among the Corinthian believers had brought the chastening hand of the Lord upon the assembly. As the direct outcome of this chastening, many were weak and sickly, and many slept. They were removed by death from the assembly on earth. This leads the apostle to assert the important principle that if we judged ourselves we should not be judged. It is not only our ways that we need to judge, but also ourselves — the secret motives, thoughts, affections that form the condition of soul. Refusing to judge ourselves, we come under the chastening of the Lord. Even so, it is grace that chastens us in the present, rather than condemns us as sinners with the world in the future.

In the course of the Epistle there is a solemn progress in the warnings of the apostle. In 1 Cor. 8 we are warned against wounding the consciences of our brethren, and thus sinning against Christ (verse 12). In 1 Cor. 9 we are warned to keep under the body lest, having preached to others, we are ourselves rejected (verse 27). In 1 Cor. 10 the warning is to take heed lest we provoke the Lord to jealousy (verse 22). It is a solemn thing to ignore the consciences of one's brethren; it may be a fatal thing to provoke the Lord to jealousy. So some found at Corinth, for in 1 Cor. 11 we read that the Lord, being provoked to jealousy, acts for His own glory, with the result that many were removed by death.

(Vv. 33, 34). It is a solemn consideration that many of the grave disorders at Corinth have no existence in Christendom today, *not because God's order is followed*, but because Christendom has entirely altered the true character of the Supper and introduced an order of man's devising. At Corinth there were scandalous abuses in the actual partaking of the Supper; nevertheless, they had not lost its meaning or changed its character. Christendom has indeed removed some of the gross abuses, but it has lost the true meaning of that to which the abuses were attached. Bad as was the Corinthian evil, that of Christendom is far worse. It has turned the Supper of remembrance into a means of grace. The feast, of which the Lord could say, “This do in remembrance of *Me*”, is partaken in the hope of receiving some blessing for *self*. The Supper that ministers to His heart is made the occasion for seeking grace for our souls. Worse still, the Supper of remembrance for the saints has been turned into an ordinance of salvation for sinners.

Moreover, while Christendom has sought to correct the unworthy way of partaking of the Supper, it admits to it unworthy people. The national churches cannot exclude from the Supper the unregenerate parishioner. The world is open to partake with the true believer. Further, not only has Christendom entirely altered the character of the Supper, but it has introduced its own order in the observance of it. In general none but a humanly authorised official can administer the Supper. It is striking that in the Epistle, which above all others speaks of God's order for the assembly, there is no mention of deacons, elders or bishops. In the very chapter that deals with gross irregularities there is no suggestion of correcting them by the appointment of an official to administer the Supper. The true character of the Supper is given, the right condition of the soul is insisted upon, but, in the administration of it, all is left to the free and unrestrained guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the chapter that follows we are instructed as to this manifestation of the Spirit in the assembly.

1 Corinthians 12.

The apostle has presented the Lord's Supper as the rallying feast of the assembly. Now he brings before us the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and His presence in the assembly, without which no godly order can be maintained when the saints come together to partake of the Supper or for the exercise of ministry.

We learn from this passage that the church is the body of Christ, formed by the Spirit, and that in the body the Holy Spirit works in dividing gifts for the good of the body to every man severally as He will (verse 11), to be used under the guidance of the Spirit (verse 3). The apostle thus warns us against the intrusion of evil spirits and human pretension by maintaining the rights of the Holy Spirit in the assembly of God.

(Vv. 1-3). The chapter opens by giving us the true marks of a ministry by the Spirit of God, thus enabling us to detect and refuse any ministry that emanates from a false spirit. Called from the Gentiles, these Corinthian believers had formerly been under the influence of false spirits, and led to worship dumb idols, and curse Jesus. No man speaking by the Holy Spirit would lead to the worship of idols, or belittle Christ. On the contrary the Holy Spirit will ever lead to the confession of Jesus as Lord.

The third verse is not exactly a test to enable us to distinguish between believers and unbelievers; it is rather giving us a means to discern whether a man is speaking by the Spirit of God or a false spirit. To have such a test in a day when revelations were still being given by the Holy Spirit, and therefore when the devil was seeking to counterfeit revelation, was of special importance. (See 2 Thessalonians 2: 2.) Nor has the importance of the test ceased, though revelation is complete, for we are warned that in the latter times some will give heed to seducing spirits, and, further, that there will be those who, while professing to be ministers of Christ, are in reality ministers of Satan. Such can be detected by their attitude to Christ. Anyone who belittles Christ is not led by the Spirit of God. (See 1 Timothy 4: 1; 2 Cor. 11: 13-15.)

Having prepared us to discern when a man is speaking by the Spirit of God, the apostle proceeds to instruct us as to the divine power and authority for the exercise of the different gifts for ministry (verses 4, 5).

(V. 4). Every one speaking by the Holy Spirit will exalt Christ, but the Spirit may speak through very different gifts. Nevertheless, all are exercised in the energy and power of the *same Spirit*.

(V. 5). Moreover, the various gifts are used to carry out different forms of service, but it is the *same Lord* who directs in every service.

(V. 6). Lastly, the exercise of the gifts in different services will produce different effects, or "operations", but it is the *same God* who works to produce the results in souls.

We thus learn that gifts can be rightly used only in the energy of the Spirit, under the direction of the Lord; and any true work in souls is the result of the operation of God.

These three verses, rightly understood, go far to rebuke, and at the same time correct, three grave disorders in Christendom. First, it is very generally taught in the religious world that, for the exercise of gift, natural ability, human wisdom and the training of a theological college are preliminary necessities. The apostle teaches that, for the exercise of gift in the church of God, we require that which no schools of men can give, and no human attainments supply. We require the presence and power of the Spirit. Under His power He can, and does, use "unlearned and ignorant" fishermen, such as Peter and John, to

fill the high position of apostles and turn the world upside down, or He can use a highly educated man like the apostle Paul. The pride of man is thus set aside and all is made to turn upon the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Secondly, Christendom claims that before a man can exercise his gift he must be ordained by man and sent out to serve by some human authority. The apostle insists that true service requires only the authority of the Lord.

Thirdly, men rely very largely for the work in souls upon eloquence, moving appeals, music, singing, and other methods that appeal to the senses. The apostle tells us that it is “God which worketh all in all”. It is God who worketh *everything* that is divine in *everyone* in whom there is a work. The apostle has already reminded these believers, “My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the *power of God*” (1 Cor 2: 4, 5).

We thus learn that the *power* for the exercise of gifts is not of man; it is from the Holy Spirit. The *authority* for the service is not from man; it comes from the Lord. The *result* in souls is not produced by man; it is the operation of God.

(V. 7). Having spoken of the divine source of all gifts, the apostle now instructs us as to the difference of the gifts and their distribution (verses 7-11). We learn that the Spirit does not concentrate all His manifestations in one man, or in one class of men. The instructions rebuke an outstanding evil of Christendom by which a special class of men is set apart for the ministry, thus dividing the people of God into clergy and laity. Scripture knows no such distinction. Christendom, setting aside God's order, practically says the manifestation of the Spirit is given to one man who is ordained to preside over a congregation. Here it is “every man” to whom the manifestation of the Spirit is given.

Moreover, this manifestation of the Spirit is given “to profit withal”. It is given, not in order that the individual may exalt himself, or obtain a prominent place amongst the people of God, or gain personal influence and advantage, but for the common good and profit of all. The instruction had special significance for the Corinthian believers who were using gifts for the exaltation of themselves.

(Vv. 8-10). The apostle proceeds to distinguish between the different gifts. He is speaking, not so much of the possession of the gifts, but of the “manifestation”, or use, of the gifts. He thus speaks, not merely of wisdom and knowledge, but of “the *word* of wisdom” and “the *word* of knowledge”. The “word” implies the communication of wisdom and knowledge for the help of others.

Wisdom is the possession of the mind of God, so that everything is viewed as before God, and in relation to God, enabling its possessor to act rightly in any particular circumstance. Knowledge is rather an intelligent acquaintance with the revealed word of God, so that the doctrine can be clearly stated. Faith, in this passage, is not simply faith in Christ and the gospel, which is common to all believers; it is rather the special faith given to certain believers that enables them to help the Lord's people, by rising above difficulties, overcoming opposition, and guiding them in their perplexities.

The gifts of healing were sign gifts in connection with our bodies. The working of miracles, other than healings, would involve a display of power over material things and spiritual beings. (Compare Mark 16: 17, 18; Acts 13: 11; Acts 16: 18; Acts 28: 5.)

Prophecy was a manifestation of spiritual power in the spiritual domain, enabling its possessor to give the mind of God as to the present or future. (Compare Acts 11: 28; 1 Cor. 14: 3.)

Discerning of spirits is a gift which, as one has said, “means the faculty of deciding, not between

true and spurious professors of the Lord Jesus, but between the Spirit's teaching and that which simulated it by evil spirits" (W.K.).

Divers kinds of tongues may be given to one, and the interpretation of tongues to another.

(V. 11). Having these different gifts set before us, we are reminded that, while some are miraculous, all are spiritual. "All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." God's order for His assembly is diversity of gifts, distributed to different individuals, exercised by one will — the power and will of the Holy Spirit. All true order in the assemblies of God's people is the outcome of God Himself working in the midst of His people. Christendom, by its human arrangements, ordained ministry and prescribed ritual, ignores this order in practice, if not in doctrine.

(Vv. 12, 13). From the varied manifestations of the Spirit the apostle passes on to speak of the sphere in which the Spirit acts. This leads to a very blessed unfolding of the truth of the assembly viewed as the body of Christ. According to God's order, believers do not exercise these gifts as isolated individuals, but as members of the body of Christ and for the good of the whole body. The apostle takes the human body to illustrate certain great truths as to the body of Christ. As the human body is one and yet composed of many members, all having their place and part in that one body, "so also is the Christ". This is a beautiful way of presenting the truth. The subject is the church, but the apostle does not say, "so also is the church", but "so also is the Christ". The body is Christ's body and includes Christ and the members. It is His body for the expressing of Himself. This is in accord with the truth first presented to the apostle at his conversion, when the Lord asks, "Why persecutest thou Me?". To touch His people is to touch Himself, His body.

We are then told that the church is composed of believers, whether from Jews or Gentiles, baptized into one body by the Spirit. This baptism of the Spirit, as we know from Acts 1: 5 and Acts 2, took place at Pentecost, when believers, by the gift and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, were united to Christ the Head in heaven and to one another.

Having presented the truth of the church as the body of Christ, the apostle, in the remainder of the chapter, uses the functions of the human body to set forth the practice that should mark the body of Christ upon earth. He shows that, as the human body has been constituted to work as one united whole to the exclusion of all disorder, so should it be in the assembly.

(Vv. 14-19). First, we are reminded that in the human body there is *diversity in unity*. "The body is not one member, but many." This diversity would be entirely ignored, and the gravest disorder arise, if each member neglected its own function through envy of members having perhaps a higher function. If the foot began to complain that it was not a hand, or the ear that it was not an eye, the work of the body would cease to function, for complaining members cease to work effectively for the good of the body. Such disorder can only be prevented by the recognition that it is God, and not man, that has "set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him", giving each its appointed place and function. The pre-eminence of one member would do away with the body. "If they were all one member", there would be no body.

(Vv. 20-25). Secondly, the apostle shows that there is *unity in diversity*. While there are many members there is only one body. But this unity of the body would be greatly imperilled if the higher members were to look with disdain upon the lower members. Already we have seen that envy of one another would break up the diversity; now we learn that disdain would break up the unity. If the eye treats the hand with contempt, and the head sneers at the feet, all unity of the body would be gone. Again, this disorder can only be excluded by the recognition of the presence and power of God, who

has tempered the body together in such a fashion that no member can dispense with the other members.

The recognition of the first great truth, that there is diversity in unity, would entirely shut out the worldly principle of clerisy, for it is evident that in the one body no one member can claim pre-eminence, each member having its own function.

The recognition of the second truth, that there is unity in diversity, would exclude the principle of independency. The members, though each having its special function, are dependent upon one another. The truth, then, of the body of Christ is that no believer has the pre-eminence and all are dependent upon one another.

(V. 26). The result is that, if “one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it”. The expression of this is doubtless greatly hindered by the divided state of Christendom. Nevertheless, the truth remains that the members do affect one another, as they are united to one another by the Holy Spirit, and that which depends upon the Spirit abides, however much our failure may hinder its expression. The more spiritual we are the more we shall realise the truth that we all affect one another. The broken condition of the assembly has weakened our spiritual sensibilities, but, as one has said, “We consciously suffer or rejoice, in the measure of our spiritual power”.

(V. 27). The apostle has been speaking of the great principles that are true of the whole assembly of God upon earth, viewed as the body of Christ. He now applies these truths to the local assembly at Corinth. He says, “Now ye are Christ's body and members in particular” (N.Tn.). He does not say, “Ye are *the* body of Christ”, as wrongly translated in the Authorised Version, but, “Ye are Christ's body”, or “Ye are body of Christ”. The assembly at Corinth was not *the* body of Christ, but was the local expression of the body as forming part of it. A general might say to some soldiers in a given locality, “Remember you are Life Guards”; he does not say, “You are *the* Life Guards”, for they do not include the whole regiment; nevertheless, they locally represent the regiment.

So today it is still the privilege and responsibility of all Christians in any given locality to gather together simply as the members of the body of Christ upon earth, and as locally representative of that one body. By the Spirit every believer is a member of the body of Christ, and being such is responsible to walk in consistency with this great truth, refusing to be associated with the sects of Christendom which practically deny this truth. In Christendom this great truth is ignored by Christians gathering together around some devoted servant, or by others forming a union to maintain some particular truth. The only unity formed by the Spirit is the one body of Christ, and the only membership that Scripture recognises is membership of this body.

In this day of brokenness sincere Christians attempt to bring about the union of Christians by establishing unions for prayer, for preaching the Gospel, for missionary work, and for the spread of certain truths such as holiness and the coming of the Lord. But while many are prepared to join these man-made unions, how few will leave the various sects formed according to man's wisdom and arrangements, in order to walk in the light of the only unity formed by the Spirit and to act under the guidance of the Spirit. And yet the Lord asks for nothing more. He does not impose upon our consciences an endless variety of meetings and unions, to join which, as it has been pointed out, would be utterly impracticable for the large majority of Christians. Nor does the Lord propose that we should leave the different sects, and travel to some distant spot, to meet together for one week in the year, in order to express our oneness in Christ. Were it so we should be asked to do something utterly impossible for the vast majority of God's people.

Surely what the Lord looks for is that His people should, in their own locality, leave everything

that is a denial of the truth, and meet together in the truth of the one body of which, if they are believers, they are already members. One has truly said, “What the Lord requires is possible for all to realise, noiseless, and without pomp, true in its character and at all seasons”. Such a path is open to the simplest and poorest of God's people. It is true that if a few have God-given faith to gather together in any locality, in the light of the truth of the one body, it could hardly be said of them, as of the assembly at Corinth, “Ye are Christ's body”, as being representative of the body of Christ, as in this day of brokenness it would be difficult to find any company of saints that includes all believers locally. It is, however, still possible for believers, who are prepared at all cost to walk in obedience to the word, to walk together in the light of the one body.

(Vv. 28-30). In the closing verses there is brought before us the fact that God has set in “the assembly” — that is the church as a whole — different gifts. In the Epistle to the Ephesians we learn that the gifts are given from Christ the ascended Head of the body. In Corinthians we learn that the Holy Ghost distributes the gifts in the assembly on earth.

Some of these gifts were doubtless for the inauguration of Christianity. Such are the sign gifts. There is not a word to say that they would continue through the whole church period. It is significant that the gifts which men covet are placed lowest in the scale.

(V. 31). Gift is something that we may rightly covet. Nevertheless, as we, like the believers at Corinth, can easily abuse gifts by seeking to use them to exalt ourselves, we are told there is a more excellent way of serving one another. Of this more excellent way the apostle immediately proceeds to speak.

1 Corinthians 13.

In chapter 13 the apostle maintains the sovereign rights of the Holy Spirit to distribute gifts in the body of Christ “to every man severally as He will”. In 1 Cor. 14 we are instructed as to the exercise of these gifts for edification. In the intervening chapter we are reminded that apart from love there can be no edification. In the Epistle to the Ephesians we read that the body edifies “itself in love”. Love is the true spirit of service. As one has said, “It is that which prompts, not simply to work, but to serve in working”. Love to one another is the principle that should regulate everything in the assembly.

The apostle, therefore, gives us this beautiful little treatise on love, in which he shows, not what we are, but what love is. Moreover, it is love in its nature that is set before us, not exactly love in its activities. Love is, and must be, active; but here it is passive love that is presented, that which love is, rather than what love does.

The apostle has spoken of gifts, and in the gifts there are degrees, for he speaks of “the best gifts”. We are to covet such; but, even so, there is a “way of more surpassing excellence”. We can serve one another by way of gift, but the more excellent way is the way of love.

First, the apostle insists upon the value of love (verses 1-3); secondly, he sets before us the nature of love displayed in all its beautiful qualities (verses 4-7); finally, he sets before us the abiding character of love as that which will not fail with the passing of time, nor vanish away in eternity (verses 8-13).

1. The pre-eminent value of love .

To prove the supreme value of love the apostle speaks of three things in which the Corinthian

believers were boasting: their eloquent speech; their spiritual possessions; and their activities. He shows that, though they may seek to exalt themselves by these things, they are of no account in God's sight if they have not love as their motive.

(V. 1). The Corinthian believers were making much of the gift of tongues and natural eloquence. The apostle warns us that it is possible “to speak with the tongues of men and of angels” and have no love. Where this is so, in spite of eloquence and seraphic words, the speaker will become as “sounding brass or a clanging cymbal”.

(V. 2). Moreover, these believers were boasting in their spiritual possessions. They had gifts and insight into all mysteries and all knowledge. They possibly had faith that could accomplish great feats, but, says the apostle, we can have rich endowments, but if we have no love we are nothing. He does not say that these gifts, prophecy, knowledge and faith, are nothing, but that *the one* who exercises these gifts without love is nothing. The apostle is not speaking of faith in Christ, for this faith worketh by love; he speaks rather of faith which enables individuals to overcome great obstacles and do great exploits; and he says it is possible to have such faith without love.

(V. 3). We may readily admit that it is possible for a man to talk well without love, and boast in his spiritual knowledge without love, and we may counsel such to talk a little less and do a little more. But the apostle further warns us that it is also possible to *do* much without love. He says that a man's beneficent activities may rise to such a height that he may give all his goods to feed the poor and his body as a martyr to be burned, yet the motive may not be love, and thus all his activities profit him nothing.

Thus words without love, knowledge without love and activities without love, while they may be used of God to accomplish His ends, will add nothing to the one who thus speaks and acts. Without love he will be nothing and profit nothing, despite all his words, his possessions and his activities.

2. The nature of love.

(Vv. 4-7). Having insisted upon the unique value of love, the apostle now unfolds the true character of love. It has been pointed out that the first eight qualities of love show that the effect of love in its nature is to lead to the entire renunciation of self with its impatience, lack of consideration, jealousy, aggressiveness, self-importance, lack of courteousness, selfishness and quarrelsomeness.

(1) “Love has long patience.” The flesh is ever impatient, but love can suffer long and wait God's time. Fleshly endurance is soon exhausted; love does not wear out.

(2) Love “is kind”. The flesh, even if it waits, will often do so in a fretful and resentful spirit; but love, while waiting, can retain a kindly spirit of consideration for others.

(3) “Love is not emulous of others.” The flesh ever seeks a place above others, and is jealous of favour or position bestowed on others rather than self. Love can delight without a thought of envy in honours bestowed upon another.

(4) “Love is not insolent and rash.” The flesh is aggressive, rashly pushing itself into prominence. Love is not self-assertive, but rather retiring and reticent.

(5) Love “is not puffed up”. The flesh is often vain and filled with its self-importance. Love takes the lowly place in service to others.

(6) Love “does not behave in an unseemly manner”. The flesh, even when high in the social

scale, can be rude and unmannerly. Love will lead the highest by birth, as well as the lowest, to be courteous.

(7) Love “does not seek what is its own”. The flesh is ever selfish and seeks its own interest. Love is unselfish and disinterested, seeking the good of others.

(8) Love “is not quickly provoked”. The flesh is ever touchy and quick to take offence and resent insults. Love is slow to anger and not easily provoked. Love, indeed, can be provoked, for in this very Epistle we are warned that it is possible to provoke the Lord (1 Cor. 10: 22); but the Lord is slow to anger; He is not quickly provoked.

In the three qualities that follow we learn that love not only leads to the renunciation of self, but that it takes positive delight in that which is holy and true.

(1) Love “does not impute evil”. The flesh is quick to imagine evil and impute wrong motives. Love does not reckon evil to exist when there is no positive evidence.

(2) Love “does not rejoice at iniquity”. Alas, the flesh delights in being occupied with evil. Love takes no pleasure in discovering evil or bringing it to light.

(3) Love “rejoices with the truth”. The flesh is unholy and can find pleasure in occupation with evil. Love is holy and finds its joy in being engaged with the truth. Love is not therefore blind, for it knows and appreciates the truth.

The last four qualities set forth the positive energy of love, whereby its possessor is sustained in the midst of a hostile world.

(1) Love “bears all things”. The flesh can bear very little without showing its resentment. Love can bear all things, and oftentimes in silence.

(2) Love “believes all things”. The flesh is ever suspicious. Love is unsuspecting and ready to believe good when there is no direct evidence to the contrary, even in the presence of much that may raise doubts.

(3) Love “hopes all things”. The flesh is ever ready to presume evil and believe the worst. Love looks upon the good rather than the evil and hopes for the best, in spite of much that may appear hopeless.

(4) Love “endures all things”. The flesh, assuming the worst, has no hope, and when hope is gone there is no power to endure. Love, hoping all things, strengthens its possessor to endure in the presence of opposition and discouragement.

3. The abiding character of love.

(Vv. 8-13). Having depicted the nature of love, the apostle declares its permanence. Love never fails. Prophecies will be done away; their fulfilment will bring them to an end. Tongues will cease with the present divided condition of the nations. Knowledge, or the partial knowledge that we have at the present time, will be done away. Such knowledge as we now possess is not full knowledge, but rather something that we are ever acquiring, and therefore only a proof of our ignorance. It is only knowledge “in part”. In the perfect condition of heaven this knowledge in part will for ever have passed away. There may be blessed unfoldings of truth in that heavenly scene, but whatever is presented there will be fully known, in contrast to our present condition in which, though truth is fully revealed, it is yet only partially apprehended. However much we may enter into the truth down here, it ever remains

knowledge “in part”. To set forth our present partial knowledge, the apostle uses the figure of a child, who can only think, speak and reason as a child. When the child becomes a man, the childish condition is left behind. So we, while in these bodies, are compelled very largely to think of spiritual things in natural terms in accord with our present condition. Thus, as to the truth, we only see through a glass darkly. At present we are like one looking at objects through some semi-transparent medium that obscures the vision. In the perfect state we shall see face to face; there will be no medium between us and that upon which we gaze. Then we shall know as we are known. We shall fully know the truth as a whole, not merely in part, even as we are fully known.

Now abide faith, hope, love, these three, “and the greater of these is love”. In the perfect state faith will be changed to sight, and thus faith will have its end. Hope will end in fruition. Love alone will abide. Faith and hope make very good travelling companions, but we part company with them at the door of heaven. We go in with one thing, love. Nevertheless, the verse speaks of the present condition, and tells us that even now love is the greater quality. It must be so, for love is the very nature of God, and therefore love is eternal.

1 Corinthians 14.

In chapter 14 we have the unfolding of God's order for the exercise of gifts in the assembly. Gifts, as we have learnt, have been distributed by the Spirit to every man to profit withal (1 Cor. 12: 7). It is not enough, however, to have received a gift; if it is to profit others, its use must be divinely regulated. In this chapter the assembly is contemplated as come together in one place (verses 23, 26, 28, 33, 34, 35); and we are instructed how the gifts are to be exercised on such occasions according to the order of God.

There are two ways in which God's order can be set aside: first, by the allowance of man's disorder, and, secondly, by the adoption of man's order. The Corinthian believers had evidently set aside God's order by the allowance of gross disorder. There had even been drunkenness at the Lord's Supper. Moreover, it would seem that the sign gifts, given by the Holy Spirit, were being used without reference to the Lord's will, and were made a means of exalting the believers and ministering to their own vanity.

In Christendom today we may seldom see such violent outrages upon ordinary decency as were exhibited at Corinth. Nevertheless, on every hand we see assemblies of professing Christians conducted on principles entirely contrary to the plain directions of God's word. With Christendom today it is not so much human disorder, as at Corinth, but rather human order that has set aside divine order. Human order is equally serious, if not more so than human disorder, for gross conduct will offend even the natural conscience and call for correction, whereas human order may quiet the conscience and be allowed without its evil being detected.

To appreciate the seriousness of this evil, we must remember that, very early in the church's history, the great distinguishing truths of the dispensation were given up by the professing mass. The presence of Christ in glory as the Head of His church, the presence of the Holy Spirit on earth, and the formation and calling of the church, are great truths that were almost entirely lost soon after the decease of the apostles. Christianity became leavened with Judaism, with the result that sincere but ignorant men attempted to maintain order by setting up a priestly class as distinguished from the laity after the pattern of the Jewish priesthood. Human order, by means of clerisy, was adopted and still prevails in all the great religious sects of Christendom.

The seriousness of adopting this human order lies in the fact that it ignores the presence and leading of the Holy Spirit. We are so slow to accept the fact that the great cardinal truth of the present moment is that we are living in the time when a divine Person — the Holy Spirit — is present upon earth on behalf of the interests of Christ, to comfort, to teach, to guide, to show us all things, and to lead us in the exercise of gift and prayer (John 14: 16-26; John 16: 13-15; 1 Cor. 12: 3; Jude 20). If, however, in the apprehension of the body of Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit, we have separated from every man-made system which, in practice, denies these great truths, we may ask, does Scripture afford any light as to the way believers should act when come together for the ministry of the word?

The fourteenth chapter of this Epistle clearly shows that God has given us very explicit directions for the exercise of ministry in the assemblies of His people when gathered together. That the principles laid down in this chapter cannot be carried out in the religious systems of Christendom only condemns these systems and makes manifest how far they have departed from God's order. If, however, our eyes have been opened to the evil of these systems, and we stand aloof from them, we shall find ourselves in a position in which it is possible, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to act according to God's order.

In the exercise of gifts by the Holy Spirit three great principles are asserted in this chapter:

First, we are to follow after love (verse 1).

Secondly, the gifts are to be used for edification (verses 2-25).

Thirdly, the gifts are to be exercised according to divine order (verses 26-40).

1. Love the motive in the use of gifts.

(V. 1). The maintenance of love, edification and divine order in the assembly entirely depends upon the free action of the Holy Spirit. Already the apostle has insisted upon the rights of the Holy Spirit in the assembly (1 Cor. 12: 4-13) and has unfolded to us the blessed qualities of love (1 Cor. 13). He now commences this fresh portion, which speaks of the exercise of gifts, with the exhortation, "Follow after love".

Had love been in exercise in the assembly at Corinth, it would have escaped many grave disorders, even if uninstructed in God's order. Love, as the apostle has shown, leads to the renunciation of self. Hence the exhortation to follow love precedes the exhortation to desire spiritual gifts and the instruction as to their use. Love will keep the motive pure, both in the desire for a spiritual gift as well as in the use of the gift. Love thinks not of self but of the good of others. Lacking in love the believers at Corinth had been using the sign gifts of healing and tongues to exalt themselves. To meet this tendency the apostle exhorts them to seek rather to prophesy.

2. Edification the great end in the use of gifts.

(Vv. 2-4). The exhortation to covet the gift of prophecy leads the apostle to show that the great end of the exercise of gift is edification. Throughout his instruction he keeps this before us. In verse 3 he speaks of "edification, and encouragement, and consolation"; in verse 5 he writes, "that the assembly may receive edification"; in verse 12, "that ye may abound for the edification of the assembly"; and in verse 26, "Let all things be done unto edifying" (N.Tn.).

He that speaks in an unknown tongue may speak to God of mysteries, but if "no man understands" there is no edification. Unless there be an interpreter, both "love" and "edification" would

exclude the use of tongues. In contrast to tongues, the one that prophesieth speaks unto men to edification, encouragement and comfort. This is hardly a definition of prophecy, but rather the result of prophesying. Thinking of Old Testament prophets, we may be inclined to limit prophecy to foretelling future events. This, however, was a limited part of the prophet's work, even in Old Testament days. His great mission was to apply the word of God to the conscience and heart for edification. This still applies as the service of the prophet in Christian times; and in this sense the gift abides. From the place that the apostle gives the gift in this passage, we may gather that it is the greatest of all gifts that remains to the church, and the one to be most desired.

(Vv. 5, 6). Tongues had, indeed, their place; but the apostle asks, what profit would it be to speak with tongues without an interpreter? If the assembly is to be edified, it can only be through one speaking in revelation, or in knowledge, or in prophecy, or in teaching. In the days of the apostle there were still those who spoke by revelation. Now that the word of God is complete we have the gift of revelation preserved in Scripture. Knowledge would imply imparting to believers that which has already been revealed. Prophesying is rather the application of the truth to the conscience, while doctrine, or teaching, is instruction in a particular truth.

(Vv. 7-11). Furthermore, for edification it is not only necessary to impart the knowledge, to apply the word by prophecy to the conscience, and to teach particular truths, but to do so in "words easy to be understood". Obscurity is not spirituality. If there were no "distinction in the sounds", music would convey no melodious meaning. If the sound is "uncertain", the trumpet will produce no effect upon the hearers. So ministry may be put forth in such a confused way that it conveys no meaning, or it may be expressed with such uncertainty that it has no effect upon the hearers. If ministry is to edify, it must be set forth in words "easy to be understood" and with the certainty of the oracles of God. Every voice in nature has a special significance, and so words have a special meaning. If we use words which convey no meaning to the hearers, we practically become barbarians speaking in some strange jargon.

(V. 12). If, then, we are zealous of spiritual gifts, let it not be that we may exalt ourselves, and excel above our brethren, but that we may excel to the edifying of the assembly. Nothing that sets aside this great principle of edification can be of the Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit is unhindered there love prevails, and where love prevails every utterance will be for edification.

(Vv. 13-17). These utterances may take other forms than the exercise of distinct gifts. It may be for this reason that in the first verse we are exhorted to desire "spiritual manifestations", rather than "spiritual gifts", as in our translation. Room is thus left for every form of utterance under the leading of the Spirit. In these verses we read of praying, singing and giving of thanks, forms of ministry which are never called gifts. But, whatever the form of utterance, edification is to be kept in view. If the Holy Spirit presides, and love prevails in the assembly, every utterance will be in a form that those who are unlearned will be able to follow intelligently and add their Amen. Fellowship, of which the Amen is the outward expression, will thus be maintained.

(Vv. 18-20). In condemning the abuse of tongues, the apostle was not moved by jealousy, for he himself spoke with tongues more than they all; but he used the gift in the right place, before the right audience, and for a right purpose. In the assembly five words with the understanding, that others might be taught, were better than "ten thousand words in an unknown tongue". In their fondness for the use of tongues, the Corinthians were acting as children, who delight in anything that makes a show. The apostle exhorts them, and ourselves, not to be children in understanding, but to be innocent as a babe of all malice. We have the flesh in us and it can, but for the grace of God, use prayer or ministry to work off a bit of malice against a brother. But, as one has said, this is a form of spiritual wickedness in high

places. Let us, then, seek to follow love and edification.

(Vv. 21-25). The apostle gives a free quotation from Isaiah 28: 11, 12 to show that, in the day of Israel's failure, when the prophets had erred, God spake to them in the tongues of foreigners, as a sign of the unbelief of those who would not hear the plain word of God. So the exercise of the gift of tongues at the introduction of Christianity was a sign, not to believers, but to unbelievers, and left the hearer without excuse.

In contrast to tongues, the gift of prophecy serves not only for the unbeliever but for the believer. When the saints are come together in one place, the exercise of tongues without an interpreter would lead an unbeliever, or an unlearned person, to conclude that the assembly was mad. Prophesying, on the other hand, would convict the conscience of an unbeliever, make manifest the secrets of his heart, and convince him of being in the presence of God.

3. Divine order to be maintained in the exercise of gifts.

(V. 26). In view of his instructions for the maintenance of divine order when come together in assembly, the apostle enquires how these believers at Corinth were acting. He had been giving full liberty to pray, to sing, to bless, to give thanks, and to prophesy, provided all was carried out in a spirit of love and edification. They were taking full advantage of their liberty, for "every one" was ready to take part. Nevertheless, they had abused their liberty by not acting "decently and in order". The liberty of the Spirit had been turned into licence for the flesh. To correct this abuse does not suggest that one-man ministry should take the place of the liberty that belongs to every man. Christendom has done this and lost the liberty in seeking to correct the abuse. The apostle says, "Let all things be done unto edifying", and in order that this may be so, he presents God's order, thus maintaining full liberty for ministry while guarding it from abuse.

(Vv. 27, 28). First, he deals with tongues. If any man speak in a tongue, let it be "by two, or at the most by three", and that in regular course, and let one interpret. If there be no interpreter the exercise of this gift is not permitted.

(Vv. 29-31). If the prophets speak, it must also be only two or three, while others judge. Speakers and hearers have their responsibility. The hearers are to judge if what is said is of the Spirit. Each speaker is to leave room for another to whom a word may be given, for all may prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and be comforted. Clearly, then, anything in the nature of one-man ministry in an assembly meeting is out of order.

(Vv. 32, 33). Moreover, the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, a statement that excludes all idea of being moved by an uncontrollable impulse. With men speaking under the power of demons it would be otherwise, resulting in unholy excitement and confusion. God is not the Author of confusion, but of peace. Any scene of confusion in the assemblies of God's people is clearly not of God.

(Vv. 34, 35). The liberty of all to prophesy one by one in the assembly does not apply to women. They are to keep silence in the assemblies. Their capability, or otherwise, is not in question. Silence in public on the part of women is according to creation order as well as the law. The woman's sphere of liberty is in the home. To speak in public is to cover herself with shame.

(Vv. 36-38). The apostle's directions are closed with a definite claim that they are the commandments of the Lord, and, as such, have all the authority of the word of God that comes, not only to the assembly at Corinth, but to all the assemblies of God's people. To neglect the directions of

the apostle is to refuse the universal application of the word of God to the church. The place of the church is to be subject to the word of God, remembering that the word of God comes to, and not from, the church. The assembly, as such, is taught; it cannot teach. The spirituality of any man will be seen by the acknowledgment that the things Paul has written are the commandments of the Lord. To disregard these directions is to ignore the direct commands of the Lord. As this is so, the apostle is very short and decisive with any who refuses subjection. With such he will not argue. He merely says, "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant".

(Vv. 39, 40). The apostle sums up his instructions by again urging them to desire to prophesy, but not to forbid to speak with tongues, but, "Let all things be done decently and in order". Whatever form spiritual manifestations may take in the assembly, let all who take part ask themselves, "Will it be in love, will it be for edification, will it be according to divine order?". Let us then remember the three great exhortations of the chapter:

- (1) "Follow after love" (verse 1).
- (2) "Let all things be done unto edifying" (verse 26).
- (3) "Let all things be done decently and in order" (verse 40).

1 Corinthians 15.

With chapter 15 we come to the third main division of the Epistle. In the first division we have the Cross of Christ excluding the wisdom of the world, the licence of the flesh and the worship of demons (1 Cor. 1 - 10). In the second division we have the free action of the Holy Spirit, maintaining order in the assembly of God (1 Cor. 11 - 14). The third division brings before us the resurrection of Christ, triumphing over death and the grave, and opening the way to the perfect state when God will be all in all.

It is evident that in the assembly at Corinth there was not only the allowance of moral laxity and assembly disorder, but also the existence of doctrinal error of a vital character, for some among them were saying, "There is no resurrection of the dead" (verse 12). This error was doubtless the outcome of their low moral condition. The progress of evil, as seen in this assembly, is solemn and instructive. First, there were evil practices; secondly, there was assembly disorder; thirdly, there was false doctrine. One evil leads to the other; moral laxity opens the door to the flesh, and denies the Cross; assembly disorder leads to clerisy and human order, and ignores the Spirit; doctrinal error opens the way for the enemy to undermine the foundations of our faith, and attacks the Person of Christ.

It is important to remark that it is not said of those who were propagating this error that they denied the immortality of the soul, but that they opposed the truth that *the body* would be raised again. Resurrection teaches that what is dead is raised. It must therefore apply to the body, for it is the body that dies, not the soul. We thus read, "Many *bodies* of the saints which slept arose" (Matthew 27: 52). Moreover, it is possible that those who asserted this error had no intention of compromising the gospel, or even denying that Christ was risen. This, however, was the terrible result, and this was the aim of Satan.

To meet this snare of the devil the apostle shows how this error affects the gospel (verses 1-11), how it attacks the Person of Christ and those who believe in Him (verses 12-19), and then he unfolds to us some of the positive blessings that follow from the resurrection of Christ (verses 20-58).

(Vv. 1, 2). As this denial of resurrection undermines the gospel, the apostle first reminds these

believers of the gospel which he had preached, which they had received, wherein they had their standing in blessing before God, and by which they were saved. But he adds the words, “unless ye have believed in vain”, for if there is no resurrection they had evidently believed in a myth. However, the apostle shows in a parenthetical remark that the reality of their faith would be proved by holding fast the word that he had announced to them in the glad tidings.

(Vv. 3, 4). Immediately he sums up the glad tidings under three heads. First, “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures”. This brings before us the great propitiatory work of Christ for all the world, foretold in all the Scriptures, for the law sets it forth in figure, the Psalms present it experimentally, and the prophets announce it prophetically. Secondly, Christ was buried, the complete evidence of His death and the solemn fact that all His links with man after the flesh are severed. Thirdly, “He was raised the third day, according to the Scriptures”, the everlasting witness that the power of death is broken, the devil defeated, and God is glorified.

The apostle carefully remarks that the gospel he preached, he had “*received*”, as we know from another epistle, “by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1: 12). To reject his gospel is, therefore, to question the revelation of Jesus Christ and the authority of Scripture.

(Vv. 5-10). Having presented the gospel that he preached, in which the resurrection has a vital place, he confirms the truth of the resurrection of Christ by bringing forward different witnesses to whom Christ appeared after He had risen from the dead. As we know, there are other witnesses, such as Mary and the two going to Emmaus, but the apostle is led to select those witnesses who, by reason of their service, or numbers, have special importance as witnesses. First, the risen Christ was seen by Cephas, the apostle who first preached the gospel to the Jew, and was used to open the door of grace to the Gentile.

Secondly, He appeared to the twelve who had accompanied Him on earth.

Thirdly, He was seen in resurrection by five hundred at one time.

Fourthly, He appeared to James, the apostle who had a leading place with the Jewish believers at Jerusalem.

Fifthly, He was seen of all the apostles, when, at the end of forty days, He was received up into heaven.

Sixthly, as the risen Man in glory, He was seen last of all by the apostle Paul, who had been the persecutor of Christ and His people, but who had been appointed to preach to the Gentiles. The apostle delights to own that it was by the grace of God that he was found amongst the witnesses to the resurrection of Christ, and if, as an apostle, he laboured more abundantly than they all, that too was by the grace of God.

(Vv. 11). Thus, whether it was by Paul, or the great company that had seen the risen Christ, the gospel that was preached, and which these Corinthians had believed, had its key-stone in the resurrection of Christ.

(Vv. 12-19). If, then, in the face of such evidence it is impossible to deny that Christ is risen, how could some dare to say that there is “no resurrection of the dead”? However, as, alas, there were such, the apostle proceeds to show the solemn consequences of this error. First, whatever was believed by those who put forth this error, it was an attack upon the Person of Christ, for if there is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not raised. Secondly, if Christ be not raised, the preaching is a fable and vain. Thirdly, if the preaching is vain, the faith of the hearers is futile, as they put their faith in that which is

false. Fourthly, if the preachers who profess to come from God are preaching fables, they are “false witnesses of God”. Fifthly, those who put their faith in that which is vain are yet in their sins. Sixthly, if those who are in their sins have fallen asleep, they must have perished. Seventhly, if the resurrection is a fable, the living who profess it are of all men the most miserable, for in the faith of resurrection they have given up this present world and they have nothing for the future.

Thus the apostle shows that this fatal error dishonoured Christ, condemned the preaching as a fable, made the faith of the hearers useless, the preachers false witnesses, those fallen asleep to have perished, and the living believers most miserable.

(V. 20). Having shown the solemn consequences that must flow from this error, the apostle proceeds to set forth, in contrast, the blessed results that flow from the great truth that “now is Christ risen from among the dead”. Christ, risen from among the dead, is “the firstfruits of them that slept”. His resurrection is, indeed, the pledge that all will be raised, the just to come into their final blessing and the unjust into judgment (Acts 17: 31). Here, however, His resurrection is the pledge of the resurrection of His *own* who have fallen asleep. Their resurrection will be after the pattern of His resurrection, a resurrection *from among* the dead. With the wicked it will not be a resurrection from among the dead — a resurrection in which some are taken out of death while others are left — it will be simply the destruction of death, with the result that all that are in the graves will immediately arise.

(Vv. 21-23). The apostle then shows that, if death came in by man, so also the resurrection is brought in by Man. There are two races of men characterised by their respective heads. All those connected with Adam come under death. All connected with Christ shall be made alive. One has truly said that the “all” in Adam's case embraces the entire race, whereas the “all” in the case of Christ as necessarily attaches to His family only. The following verse, which speaks of the order of resurrection, makes it very clear that Christ and only those who are Christ's are in view. Christ was raised the firstfruits, not of the resurrection of the dead, but of those raised *from among* the dead. This resurrection of His own will take place “at His coming” and will surely include all the Old Testament saints, for they too “are Christ's”, though doubtless the apostle, in writing to the Corinthian assembly, has the church more especially in view.

(Vv. 24-28). Without mentioning the resurrection of the wicked, the apostle at once passes from the resurrection of those that are Christ's to the end of Christ's earthly kingdom. This end will be reached when every opposing rule and authority and power has been annulled, when every enemy has been put down, and the last enemy, death, has been destroyed. This indeed involves, if it does not specifically mention, the resurrection and judgment of the dead.

The great aim of the kingdom of Christ will be to bring the whole universe into subjection to God. As the creation has been subjected to sin and death and the power of the devil by one man, Adam, so every enemy will be dealt with by one Man, Christ, and all be brought into subjection to God. The “end” here is not simply the end of the present age, as in Matthew 13: 39, 49. The end of the present age introduces the kingdom of Christ. Here the end marks the close of the kingdom and the beginning of the Eternal State, the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The latter part of verse 24 and verses 25 and 26 describe the character of the reign of Christ, the last act being the destruction of the power of death.

Then, when every evil has been dealt with, Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God, the Father. The whole passage views the Son as having become Man, in order to accomplish the will of God in bringing the whole creation into subjection to God. In order to accomplish this great end God has committed to the Son, as become Man, universal power. Having by His mighty kingdom power

brought all into subjection to God the Father, He still remains the subject Man as when upon this earth, in order that God may be all in all. The Son does not cease to be God and one with the Father, even as He was on earth, but “Christ will take His place, as Man, the Head of the whole redeemed family, being at the same time God blessed for ever, one with the Father” (J.N.D.). It does not say that the Father may be all in all, but that God — the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost — may be all in all. What a blessed world will that be when in the new heavens and the new earth God will be the Object of all, and morally set forth in all, for is not this the meaning of these words, so simple in their language but so profound in their significance?

(Vv. 29-32). It is well to notice that verses 20-28 form a parenthesis, in which the apostle, starting from the great fact of the resurrection of Christ, traces its far-reaching effects in connection with His own, with the kingdom, and with the end of time, on into the new heavens and new earth when God will be all in all. Having shown the far-reaching results of resurrection, the apostle resumes the thread of his argument from verses 18 and 19. In these verses he has proved that, if there is no resurrection, those fallen asleep have perished, and believers still living are of all men most miserable. He now asks two questions in connection with these two classes. First, if those fallen asleep have perished, “What shall the baptized for the dead do if those that are dead rise not at all?”. Why are they baptized for them? Baptism is a figure of death, and implies that the one baptized accepts the place into which Christ's death puts the believer as regards this world. Christ by His death and believers who have fallen asleep have actually severed their links with this world. By baptism we that are living identify ourselves in figure with Christ and the saints fallen asleep in their death to this world. How senseless to do this if the dead rise not.

Secondly, continuing his argument of verse 19 that if there is no resurrection we, believers, are of all men most miserable, he asks, “Why stand we in jeopardy every hour?”. What folly to run the risk of death if there is no resurrection. He then refers to his own life of suffering, for Christ's sake, and that the saints might share with him in his joy in Christ. This constantly brought him face to face with a violent death, so that, in the spirit of his mind, he died daily. So violent was the opposition at Ephesus that he despaired of his life (2 Cor. 1: 8). Men behaved like beasts and to speak figuratively, after the manner of men, he had fought with beasts at Ephesus. But what sense was there in enduring all this suffering, and endangering his life, if the dead rise not? Would he not have been wiser, if there is no resurrection, to act on the principle of those who say, “Let us eat and drink; for to-morrow we die”?

(Vv. 33, 34). The apostle, viewing things from a moral stand-point, sees that behind the false doctrine there was bad practice. False views may, indeed, be the outcome of ignorance through being linked with a system of false teaching. But when the soul that has been in the light of the truth adopts serious error that denies a great fundamental truth of Christianity, we shall generally find that bad practice is behind the bad doctrine, and connected with the bad practice there will be worldly associations which corrupt good manners. Hence the apostle appeals to these saints to “awake to righteousness, and sin not”. Moreover, this self-indulgence and worldly association only proved how little they knew God. Some indeed had not the knowledge of God. This was to their shame.

(Vv. 35-41). Having shown the practical life of the believer who, governed by the truth of resurrection, takes a place apart from the world, the apostle now meets the rationalistic objections of some who were asking, “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”. The one who raises such questions proves that he is a fool, who measures the all-powerful and all-wise God by human limitations, and rejects everything that he cannot explain. The apostle rebukes this folly by reminding the objector of his own actions; “That which *thou* sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, *thou* sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat,

or of some other grain". You do the sowing, says the apostle, "But *God* giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him". Man can put the seed in the ground, but man cannot make it grow, still less can man give it a body according to his pleasure.

Death must come in before resurrection. Death is dissolution, but death is not annihilation. The seed as such dies in order to bring forth the plant. One has said, "No doubt there is a germ or principle of life: but what does the objector know of it? If he is utterly unacquainted with this even in the seed, is he in a position to cavil as to the body?". We know that the plant comes from the seed, but we do not know how. Hence the apostle does not tell us *how* the body is raised, though he rebukes the folly of those who deny resurrection of the body because they cannot conceive how it can be accomplished.

There are indeed different bodies in the plant world; every seed has its own body, and that a God-given body. In the animal world there are bodies of men, beasts, fishes and birds. In the material world there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, and in the heavenly bodies there are differences, for the sun, the moon and the stars differ in glory.

(Vv. 42-44). If, then, there are all these differences in bodies in the natural and material world, need we raise questions because there is a vast difference between our present bodies and the bodies we shall have in resurrection? The apostle thus takes occasion by the folly of these reasoners to bring before us the character of the resurrection body and the resurrection state. In contrast to our present bodies, the resurrection body will be incorruptible, glorious, powerful and spiritual. Believers will not be disembodied spirits, but in resurrection they will receive spiritual bodies, little as, at present with our finite minds, we can comprehend either a spiritual existence or a spiritual body. We admit there is a natural body entirely suited to the conditions of the present life on earth. So we know believers will have a spiritual body entirely suited to heavenly conditions.

(Vv. 45-50). In proof of these great truths the apostle turns to Scripture. He says, "So it is written". Quoting from Genesis 2: 7, he reminds us that the first man, Adam, became a living soul. But the first Adam is, as we know, "the figure of Him that is to come" — "the last Adam", Christ — Who is the Head of a new race that will never be superseded by another Head and another race. The last Adam is "a quickening spirit", One Who in resurrection could breathe on His disciples and say, "Receive the Holy Spirit", and thus communicate life in the Spirit (John 20: 22). But the natural comes before the spiritual, and the first man is earthy, made out of the dust of the earth; the second Man is out of heaven; and as we have borne the image of the earthy, so shall we, Christians, bear the image of the heavenly. Here the apostle is not speaking of the Christian setting forth the character of Christ, and thus, even now being changed into the same image from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3: 18), but of the full conformity to the image of the heavenly when we have our resurrection bodies. It is evident that these present, frail bodies of flesh and blood, that are liable to corruption, cannot inherit the kingdom of God with its incorruption.

(Vv. 51-55). This being so, the question arises, how, and when, shall we obtain these spiritual and incorruptible bodies, as some believers are living on earth, and some have fallen asleep? The apostle meets these questions by declaring a mystery, one of God's truths that could not be known until revealed to His people. We thus learn that not all believers will pass through death; "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed". The Old Testament saints, like Job, knew indeed of the resurrection of the dead, but they knew nothing of this great secret that the natural bodies of the living saints will be changed into spiritual bodies without the saints going through death. What a proof of the mighty efficacy of the death of Christ, which has so entirely met the penalty of death for the believer, that it is possible for him to be changed into the image of the heavenly without going through death!

But, if we are not all going to pass through death, “we shall all be changed”, both sleeping and living saints. This great change will take place “in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”. In speaking of the last trump, the apostle is probably alluding to the final act in the breaking up of a Roman camp as they started a march, a figure that would be well understood in those days. In a moment this body that is liable to corruption will put on incorruption, and this body that is mortal will put on immortality. In view of this mighty triumph over the power of death, we can well say with Isaiah, “Death is swallowed up in victory” (Isaiah 25: 8). How mighty the power that, from every spot of this earth, where, through the long ages, there has been resting the dust of saints who have fallen asleep, whether by martyrdom or natural decay, will raise the dead, and, together with every living saint, will change them into the image of the heavenly, and this in a moment of time, “sooner than the mind can reckon, or the eye discern”.

Looking back over the long, sad history of a fallen world, we see that the shadow of death is over all. *Looking on* to this great event, the believer can say, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”, words used by the prophet Hosea when he records the promise of Jehovah, “I will ransom them from the power of Sheol. I will redeem them from death: Where, O death, are thy plagues? where, O Sheol, is thy destruction?” (Hosea 13: 14).

(Vv. 56, 57). The apostle reminds us that “the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law”. But God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ, the One Who bore the sting when made sin on the Cross, and “redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (2 Cor. 5: 21; Galatians 3: 13). With the blessedness of the truth filling his soul the apostle breaks forth into praise to God.

(V. 58). Wherefore, on account of the mighty victory that Christ has gained by His death, and that is witnessed by His resurrection, and the full blessedness of which we shall enter into in the twinkling of an eye, let us be firm in maintaining the truth, unmoved by any attacks of the enemy, and abounding always in the work of the Lord, knowing that any toil or suffering will have a glorious answer and not be in vain.

1 Corinthians 16.

Having accomplished the main purpose of his Epistle in dealing with the moral laxity, assembly disorder and erroneous teaching, the apostle closes with some practical exhortations as to giving, and information as to his movements and that of other servants of the Lord.

(Vv. 1-4). In the first four verses he speaks of “the collection for the saints”. We may rightly have collections to meet the need of the Lord's gifted servants from whom we receive spiritual help, but there are times when it is also necessary to have collections for the poor of the flock. The special need of the saints at Jerusalem at that time was a case in point. In that city there was a large number of saints who had suffered persecution and there were probably many widows and orphans. From the Epistle to the Hebrews we also learn that they had suffered the spoiling of their goods. From Jerusalem the gospel had gone out to the Gentiles, and as the Gentile converts had received spiritual things, it was only right that they should give of their temporal things. This collection was to proceed regularly, each one laying up in store, according to the way that God had prospered him. As it was their own collection, they were free to appoint their own administrators. The apostle, who was well-known to the saints at Jerusalem, would commend them with letters from himself. If suitable that the apostle should go to Jerusalem, then the delegates from Corinth would accompany him.

(Vv. 5-9). In reference to the collection the apostle had spoken of visiting the Corinthian assembly. He now again refers to this proposed visit, and tells them that for the present he was postponing it. With great grace and wisdom he does not tell them the reason. In the second chapter of his Second Epistle, when he has seen by their repentance the effect of this first letter, he is free to tell them in detail why he could not come to them. Nevertheless, he tells them why he tarried at Ephesus, the city from which he is writing; for there a great door was opened to him that was effectual in blessing, and there were many adversaries. If the Lord opens a door, the devil will surely stir up many adversaries; the apostle's movements were not governed by the adversaries, but by the Lord who kept the door open.

(Vv. 10, 11). Nevertheless, Timothy may visit them and hence the apostle commends him in a way specially suited to the circumstances. Timothy was evidently of a timid disposition, so they were to be careful to act in such a way that he would be with them without fear. Moreover, he was young, but let him not on this account be despised. Could there be a greater commendation than the fact that he not only did the work of the Lord, but he did it in the same spirit as the apostle? He was one who carried out the exhortation already given to the Corinthian assembly, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11: 1).

(V. 12). Though the apostle might not be free at that time to visit Corinth, it did not follow that it would be wrong for another servant of the Lord to visit this assembly. Evidently the apostle judged that Apollos could help the assembly, and so had "begged him much that he would go". However, Apollos was unwilling, so the apostle, having expressed his desire, leaves the servant of the Lord free to act before his Master.

(Vv. 13, 14). The Corinthian saints were not to be dependent upon the servants of the Lord. Hence, whether the servants come, or refrain from coming, the Corinthian saints are exhorted, first, to *be vigilant*. An ever active adversary demands constant vigilance. Secondly, they are to *stand fast in the faith*. The inroads of false teaching can only be met by standing fast in the whole circle of truth. Thirdly, to watch against the adversary and stand fast in the faith demands that they *quit themselves like men*. Alas, many at Corinth had been acting in a carnal way, proving that spiritually they were but babes when they should have been full-grown. Fourthly, quitting themselves like men would demand that they *be strong*, and this means, as the apostle says in another epistle, that they are to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2: 1). Fifthly, spiritual strength expresses itself in love; the apostle therefore adds, "Let all things ye do be done *in love*" (N.Tn.). Alas, how many things may be done in connection with the assembly of God which may be perfectly right, and yet with a motive that is entirely wrong because love is lacking.

In the case of these saints at Corinth, they had been largely marked by carelessness instead of watchfulness; instead of standing fast in the faith, some were speculating about it and even denying such a fundamental truth as the resurrection; instead of quitting themselves like men, they had fallen into the ways of the world; feebleness had marked them rather than strength and selfishness instead of love. Good for us all to take these exhortations to heart.

(Vv. 15-18). Another important exhortation follows with reference to a class of servants who are very blessedly described as having "devoted themselves to the saints for service". They were not necessarily men endowed with gifts such as preaching or teaching, which were for the whole church, and might give them a prominent place before others, but they represent a valuable class of servants who locally addict themselves in an orderly way to serving the Lord's people. There is a danger that such should be overlooked in favour of those whose activities bring them more into public. Hence the

exhortation is to recognise such and be subject to them as, indeed, to every one joined in the work and labouring. The apostle himself recognises such as having supplied that which was lacking on the part of the Corinthian assembly. The words that follow would seem to indicate that this was not temporal help but spiritual refreshment. This is confirmed by the Second Epistle, from which we learn that the apostle refused all temporal help from this assembly (2 Cor. 11: 9, 10).

(Vv. 19, 20). The assemblies in Asia send their salutation. Aquila and Priscilla, whom the apostle had first met at Corinth, send special salutations, together with the assembly that met in their house. Let them acknowledge one another with the kiss that expresses brotherly love; but let this customary method of greeting be in holiness.

(Vv. 21-24). The apostle appends his salutation with his own hand, the sure token that he has dictated the letter (2 Thess. 3: 17). He adds a solemn word of warning, only found in this Epistle, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha". The meaning of these words is, we are told, "Accursed: our Lord cometh". It would indicate that the coming of the Lord may reveal the solemn fact that there are some who have taken their place amongst the Lord's people who have never really been touched by His love and therefore have no love for Him, and so prove that they are not the Lord's. The apostle desires that the grace of the Lord may be with these saints, and concludes by assuring them that his love went out to them all. It was not, however, mere human love, but love "in Christ Jesus". However faithfully he may have written to them, love was the motive; thus he carried out his own exhortation to them, "Let all things ye do be done in love".