Notes on 2 Corinthians

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Introduction

Notes on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians with a new translation.

Very different in tone from the first Epistle, yet not less distinctly from the same mind and heart, is the second Epistle to the Corinthians. No writing of the apostle bears more unequivocally the marks of all which characterised him; none more corresponding with the state of those whom he addressed; but this in rich restorative grace and deep triumphant feeling before God. Of all the epistles none abounds in more rapid transitions; as indeed it flowed from profound exercises of soul. The circumstances through which he had passed evidently fitted him for the work in hand, which forbids any division of orderly treatment of subjects. This however is just what should be; nor does any epistle afford a finer example of what is suitable to the case in every point of view.

Personal experience, and this used for the help of others in their trials; the work of the Lord in all its varieties, with the action of the Holy Ghost answering to it; the truth of God in its distinctive shape and highest forms, or the glory of Christ contrasted with the spirit, in former days hidden under the letter; the walk and service which befit such revelations of grace; the affections called into action by all this in the midst of sorrow and suffering, with evil abounding and grace much more abounding; the trials and wants of saints, calling out the loving remembrance of others; the opposition of self-seeking men, employed of the enemy to hinder the blessing of saints and to lower the glory of

Christ, to distract the weak and give scope for unscrupulous activity; but on the other hand the energy of the Holy Ghost working not only to vouchsafe heavenly visions, and so give faith its. object, but to manifest Christ in weakness and suffering where the power of Christ may rest, are all brought out with remarkable force and fulness.

Hence the expression of feeling is far more frequent and pronounced in the second Epistle than the first. Not that the first fails in showing that the apostle loved the Corinthians, and still hoped all things. But the second brings out still more manifestly how he bore all, believed all, endured all. Here therefore he speaks with far more confidence of his sure reward, in a love which sought not his own things but theirs. Here he explains his motives with much greater openness. Their subjection to the rebukes of his first epistle, their obedience to the word of the Lord which he had charged on their consciences, left him free now to explain himself. But even so he speaks with the greatest delicacy, lest he might seem careful to vindicate himself instead of cherishing jealousy for the Lord alone. Their edification was the nearest object of his heart, next to the glory of the Lord, if indeed we may even thus far sever what faith knows to be inseparable. More than once he takes up the case of the soul under discipline (as in the first epistle he had urged them to act in holy jealousy for Christ), first to show grace in restoring him who was surcharged with grief; and secondly to own how they in every way had proved themselves pure in the matter.

We may in a general way regard the epistle as consisting of the following divisions. The first seven chapters present a sketch of his ministry in its trials and dangers

and the conflicts of soul which the state of the saints, of the Corinthian saints themselves above all, occasioned, in the mighty power, glorious character and blessed result of the service of Christ, triumphing over all opposition, up to death itself, in love to its objects; and this not only in those ministering but also in those ministered to, as being the working of the Holy Ghost in the life of Christ; and hence superior to all that could oppose, even to death and judgment; but exercised in suffering and in holiness; yet having to do with the judgment of unholiness which grace turns to a deeper repentance on the part, not only of the guilty, but of all who have to do with them, so as to bring glory to the Lord in Satan's defeat, as well as in quickened and strengthened divine affections.

Next, in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 we have an admirable exposition of the divine principle in giving and receiving among Christians, combined with his call to the Corinthian saints, whom he could now freely exhort, as brought back by grace, to abound in grace towards the poor saints in Judea: a constant and most grave duty, and a blessed privilege of the church towards the poor saints at all times, when they take it up in faith of the Lord's grace, and in love towards His own, as the apostle bore lays down.

Lastly, from 2 Corinthians 10 we have an apologetic discourse, in which the truest humility goes hand in hand with burning indignation against those whom Satan employs to oppose the glory of Christ and destroy the blessing of the saints under cover of exposing the imaginary faults of His servants. Nothing can exceed the propriety, as well as profound feeling with which the apostle handles this difficult and delicate theme; nothing

more withering to the adversaries of grace, whatever their pretension to light and righteousness. To a spirit so disinterested, loving, and lowly as Paul’s it was a very great pain to speak of himself; and he calls it his folly, as he calls on them to bear with it. Vanity loves to speak of itself and its little doings; true greatness, while it delights in that which is its own source — the all-surpassing One in whom it loses thoughts of self, can for the sake of others afford to speak of labours and sufferings for that loved object and for all that He loves, so as to refute these heartless detractions and calumnies. And as the unworthy insinuation of levity of purpose was dispelled by the first chapter, so in the last those who had undermined his apostleship he warns of the just severity which must befall them if they persevere in a course as dishonouring to the Lord as it was destructive of their own souls.

2 Corinthians 1-4

2 Corinthians 1.

Restorative grace, according to the character and power of life in Christ, is the key-note of this epistle, and that accompanied by the deepest exercise of the heart under the disciplinary ways of God. If the Corinthians must learn it in a manner suited to their state, the apostle had to do so far more profoundly, that he might be enabled fittingly to carry on and complete the gracious work of humbling and self-judgment begun in them by his first epistle. The Lord called him to pass through the severest personal trial and suffering in order the more effectively to serve and sympathise with them, now that their state interpreted by love admitted of unreserved affection and its free expression to them. The influence of all this, as we may see, is very considerable on the style of his second letter, which abounds in the most rapid transitions and abrupt allusions, as he tells out for their profit his own affliction, and the faithfulness of God, intermingling experience, doctrine, comfort, and warning, most intimately; yet so far from confusion that all helps on the great aim of bringing home the lessons of grace to the annihilation of self-confidence or glorying in man.

“Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ1 by God’s will, and Timothy the brother to the assembly that is in Corinth, with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia; grace to you and peace from God our Father and [our] Lord Jesus Christ.”

The opening words of the second epistle naturally resemble those of the first, yet with well defined marks of difference. There is no repetition here of his calling to the apostolate, nor does he qualify the assembly at Corinth as sanctified in Christ Jesus, and saints by the analogous calling of God, which one cannot but judge intrinsically calculated and intended by grace to exercise their consciences in the then state of things in that city. Sosthenes was there graciously associated with the apostle, as one known to and probably of themselves, whom he could honour if they did not; as here we find Timothy from elsewhere, as to whose worthy reception by them the first epistle shows him solicitous. But in the first the apostle had joined the Corinthian church “with all that call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, both theirs and ours,” here “with all the saints that are in the whole of Achaia.” It is clear that the first gives a far wider extension than the second, and leaves room for a profession which might not be real, as indeed the apostle evidently feared for the Corinthians themselves in both epistles, especially the first. But the direct force seems to be to embrace, in the express address, saints here or there in Achaia who might not be gathered into assemblies, or such as called on the Lord’s name everywhere. As it was of moment that all these should know their heritage in the privileges given and revealed, and be kept from the snare of unbelief which denies their catholicity and continuance, so it was of moment that all the saints throughout Achaia should know and rejoice in the grace that had wrought restoratively in the Corinthian assembly, whatever might remain to be desired from the Lord. It was their common interest and profit for others as well as those immediately concerned. If one member

suffer, all the members with it; and if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it. In both Epistles he could not but wish them characterised by “grace” the spring and by “peace” the effect of love above evil and need, flowing richly and freely “from God our Father and [our] Lord Jesus Christ,” the source and the channel of every blessing, but here again associated with the desired grace and peace.

“Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, that comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those that are in any tribulation through the comfort into which we are comforted ourselves by God, because even as the sufferings of the Christ abound toward us, so through the Christ2 aboundeth also our comfort. But, whether we are in tribulation, [it is] for your comfort and salvation, that worketh in endurance of the same sufferings which we also suffer (and our hope [is] stedfast for you);3 or whether we are comforted, [it is] for your comfort and salvation, knowing that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so also of the comfort.” (Vers. 3-7.)

How striking the difference as compared with the opening of the first epistle! There he thanked his God, not indeed for the spiritual state of the Corinthian saints — very far from it, whatever some might but most unintelligently have inferred — but for their rich endowments. Now he can bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the grace which turns to account all our tribulation, designating Him the Father of compassions, and the God of all comfort. And surely if one adore such a God, that adoration is enhanced when one thus comes in contact with a heart (once how far

from it till purified by faith!) which could thus welcome any and every trouble, be it the sorest, comforted by God so as to comfort those that were in any conceivable trouble through the comfort with which itself had been already comforted. It is well to look at the operation of grace in a man of like passions, and not only in the fulness and perfection of all, even in Christ Himself. And certainly, if Paul was remarkable for an energy of loving labour beyond every other, he was yet more so for the variety and greatness of what he suffered for Christ's name. So here he can speak of what he had just proved afresh. The sufferings of the Christ abounded towards us, as he says; so through Him did our comfort, he adds. His faith laid hold of the Lord's way and end, and applied it to his own circumstances, and the working of grace in the face of all. As love never fails, so all things work together for good. And whether we are in tribulation, it is for your comfort and salvation. Love interprets boldly and liberally. He had heard enough to cheer his spirit: "whether we are comforted, it is for your comfort and salvation, that worketh in endurance of the same sufferings which we also suffer." Far other were the sufferings of the Corinthian saints from his own. But grace delights in sharing all it can; and faith gives the highest character to whatever it can discern to be of God. In this spirit the apostle seems here to regard the sufferings of the saints at Corinth, and to hope the best results, "Knowing that as ye are partakers of the suffering, so also of the comfort."

The apostle now refers to the afflicting circumstances into which God had been pleased to bring him, in order the more deeply to teach, not merely him, but the Corinthians, and indeed all saints, His ways. The process

is painful, no doubt, the profit immense to others as well as the soul itself, and this to God's glory. How good is the God we adore!

"For we would not have you ignorant, brethren, as to[4] our tribulation that came to pass[5] in Asia, that we were excessively pressed beyond power, so as to despair even of our living. But we ourselves have had in ourselves the sentence of death, that we should not have our trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth [or will][6] deliver, in whom we have hope that he will also yet deliver, ye also labouring together by supplication for us that from many persons[7] the gift toward us may by many be matter of thanksgiving for us. For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience that in holiness[8] and sincerity before God, not in carnal wisdom but in God's grace, we conducted ourselves in the world, and more abundantly towards you. For no other thing we write to you than what ye read, or even recognise, and I hope that ye will recognise unto the end, even as also ye recognised us in part that we are your boast, just as ye also are ours in the day of our[9] Lord Jesus." (Vers. 8-14.)

Thus does God prove Himself rich in mercy, and this, not in conferring objective favour only in Christ, but in rendering His tried ones superior to all trouble, not by exempting those He loves from suffering and sorrow, but by giving the faith that accepts all at His hands with confidence in His love. Here we see, not the Holy One of God, who suffered as He was tempted to the uttermost, sin apart, and on the cross knew not sin indeed, but what it was for God to make Him sin; here we see a man of like passions with ourselves, strengthened with might in the inner man, and the outer crushed in every way,

yet out of the eater meat coming forth, and out of the strong sweetness. Nor is this all. But he had to do, as we too, with One who knows how to order the tribulation so that its fruit, in divine consolation, should come out just at the right moment for the saints that needed succour and comfort. The apostle's mouth is opened to the Corinthians; his heart, which had been rebelled by their evil and hardness, has expanded. He can now speak freely of deliverance, that they too, humbled, if not humble, may hear and be glad, with him magnify the God and Father of the Lord Jesus, and exalt His name together. By the trouble that happened in proconsular Asia he had been pressed excessively beyond his power, so as to despair, as he says, even of living, but grace, as suits God always, wrought unfailingly. It was not by a providential intervention to screen the apostle from suffering, still less by a miracle which might confound the adversaries, but because he had abidingly the sentence of death in himself. This Job had not, and so his long struggle, as he writhed under his sorrows from without and within; to it, as far as could be, he was brought at the last before his deliverance and blessing came. The apostle bowed to it all along, and hence was above all that Satan could do, for he has no power beyond death, and was utterly baffled by the faith which accepted such a sentence,10 and this "in ourselves, that we should not have our trust in ourselves, but in God that raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth, or will, deliver, in whom we have our hope that he will deliver." It is the power of the resurrection brought into the present, so as not to shrink from, but to retain, the sentence of death in himself. If Abraham learnt this in his last lesson of faith in Isaac (Heb. 11:17-19), the apostle declares that he

had it in himself. Such was to him the power of life in Christ, not ascetically, so as to exalt self after all, but finding strength in faith, giving glory to God, the perfect and unlimited deliverer. But his unburdened heart brings them in also as labouring together by supplication on his behalf that the gift of grace towards him by many persons may be matters of thanksgiving from many on his behalf. Thus would he by grace bind together, at whatever cost to self, the hearts of saints in thanksgiving for him, once in danger of wanton and utter alienation through the levity which exposed them to Satan's wiles. How far from Christ is independence, whether personal or ecclesiastical!

Yet is there nothing good, loving, or holy without God, to whom conscience, as well as the heart, purified by faith, and free, ever refers. Therefore does the apostle next turn to the ground and proof of spiritual integrity, though he writes for their sakes rather than his own. "For our boasting is this, the testimony of our conscience that in (simplicity, or rather) holiness and sincerity (literally of God, but in sense) before God, not in carnal wisdom, but in God's grace, we conducted ourselves in the world, and more abundantly toward you." He could the more boldly ask and count on their prayers from the persuasion that he had a good conscience as to his general conversation in the world, as before God, and especially as toward themselves. (See Heb. 13) He did not seek to conciliate men to and for himself, but as bent on pleasing God, he did not doubt that a conscience cleared in them would acknowledge a conscience void of offence in himself. Activity of self blinds the person, and genders bitter thoughts, especially of the one whose course morally

condemns others; if the eye be single, on the contrary, the whole body is full of light, and love flows freely. “For no other things we write to you than what ye (well know, or) read, or even recognise, and I hope that ye will recognise unto the end, even as also ye recognised us in part that we are your boast, as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

Now that self-judgment had begun to work in the saints at Corinth, they would not fail to see the folly of taxing him with inconstancy, whose life as a saint and servant of God had been one of immovable firmness and unbending truth. There is much difference as to the force here of ἀναγινώσκετε. Elsewhere in the New Testament the meaning, beyond controversy, is to “read,” which very many hold to, like the Authorised translation; others, like Calvin, contend for “well know,” which is rarely if over found save in poets. It is a question between what they might gather from his presence in their midst, or from his epistle. But he writes with the calm confidence of one before God, which fails not to tell on the conscience of saints wherever they feel freely, apart from the heat and bias of party; and as he had ground to trust that they had thus recognised him in part at least, so also he hoped that they would to the end own that he was their boast, even as they were his in the day of our Lord Jesus. It was good for all to anticipate that day.

The apostle now explains circumstances which some in Corinth were as quick to misunderstand as ready to turn to his advantage. He is free to explain now as things are, but he is more anxious to turn all to the account of Christ and the truth, and this in the truest interests of the saints.

“And with this confidence I was intending previously to come unto you, that ye might have a second favour,11 and through you to pass into Macedonia, and again from Macedonia to come unto you, and by you to be sent forward into Judea. Having then this intention, did I, pray, use lightness? Or what I purpose,12 do I purpose according to flesh, that with me may be the yea yea and the nay nay? Now God [is] faithful that our word that [was] unto you is13 not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, that was preached among you by us, by me, and Silvanus, and Timothy, became not yea and nay, but is become yea in him. For as many as [are] God’s promises, in him [is] the yea; wherefore also by him14 [is] the amen for glory to God by us.” (Vers. 15-20.)

The injurious impression, and even charge, of some at Corinth against the apostle was based on the slenderest appearances, and these severed from the action in him of power and love and a sound mind. How opposed to the Spirit were not such thoughts in them! The modification of his plans in not going before to visit them was as distinctly in subjection to the Lord, as his actual desire to see and help them. It was not dread of any there, still less was it from lack of moral purpose in himself. His heart was toward them in the large and holy activity of divine love. Blessed before to them, he sought that they might be favoured of the Lord again on his way to and from Macedonia for Judea; and their affectionate care in sending him on to the East he valued and counted on, His true motives he let them know afterwards. Those who yielded to such surmisings proved both their own bad state, and their ignorance of the apostle; for character and state are according to the object before the man. If it be Christ in love to His own,

and even to man generally, the result follows in a walk according to God. This is to imitate God, and serve the Lord. If there be an absence of purpose on the one hand, or on the other a planning according to flesh, in either way self governs, and there could be for others no just ground of confidence. The man is as he loves, or loves not. He that dwells in love dwells in God, and God in him. He that lacks an object lacks character, and can only be frivolous and inconstant; he that seeks personal influence, power, honour, money, etc., is degraded according to what his heart is set on. What is of the flesh is worthless, and its purpose untrustworthy. In God only is continuance, and His Spirit alone works it in the heart and ways, where Christ displaces self as the object. For man otherwise is incapable of walking or serving according to God. He is either and evidently fickle, or his planning, however positive, is without God's guidance and strength.

Beautifully does he turn, in a spirit of grace, from their insinuations against himself to the doctrine he preached. "Now God [is] faithful, that our word that [was] unto you is not yea and nay." There is no shift of purpose, no uncertainty, in the gospel, whatever may be thought of the man. God Himself is pledged to it and concerned in it. His glory and His grace are not more bound up with it than His truth and righteousness. In the mighty work of redemption, all that God is shone out as nowhere else in past or future. There He vindicated His own nature in everlasting hatred of sin; there He demonstrated His love, rising above the worst evil of the creature. Did He compromise His word? He accomplished it, letter and spirit, to the full. Did He abandon His holiness? Never was His absolute separation from evil so manifested, nor

His righteous judgment of it over so seen as then; yet then it was that every obstacle to the outflow of allovercoming grace toward sinners, whatever and wherever they might be, fell before the efficacy of the one offering and sacrifice of Christ. And as in the work which is its ground, so in the preaching, there is no inconsistency. On the contrary, every fact and thought, otherwise irreconcilable, are there brought into harmony. Our only absolute consistency is in Christ and His cross.

Here it will be observed that the apostle associates others with himself. For the grace and truth that came through Jesus Christ ever enlarges the heart, and gives enduring fellowship; and this appears still more clearly in what follows. “For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, that was preached among you by us, by me, and Silvanus, and Timothy, became not yea and nay, but is become yea in him.” The glory of the person proclaimed answers to the certainty guaranteed. Doubt, difficulty, hesitation, or inconsistency can have no place in the Son of God, now the glorified Man, who suffered on the cross for the annulling of sin; and the apostle and his companions know and preached no other doctrine. As the truth is one, and they believed, so is the doctrine the same which they preached. Others might seek novelties; and it is natural to the active, restless, spirit of man. They could not so deal with such a person, such a work, or such a message. That divine person, in His infinite grace, governed their minds and filled their hearts; and out of the abundance of their hearts they preached the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and this as consistently each with himself, as all with each other.

Thus he declares most unequivocally that the preaching of him and his companions had none of the vacillation or conflict common to the schools of human opinion, and this because all truth is verified in Christ's person. It is become yea in Him. It abode the same. Perfection is come in Him, and also as available for others. This is far more than the witnesses' agreement with themselves and one another, which is eclipsed by Christ, who is personally the truth, and all is become verified in Him. Nothing more distant from the subdued, hesitating, style of Greek thought and expression, where even what was not doubted they put as opinion. Here all is sure, and unclouded, and peremptory. The gospel, as Paul preached it, admits of no doubtful answer, any more than double dealing; and this, because it is revealed in the Second man, who has set aside the first, with his darkness and doubt, no loss than with his guilt and corruption.

More than this: "For how many soever [are] God's promises, in him is the yea; wherefore15 also through him [its] the amen to God for glory by us." Hence it is not only that there is the affirmation of all promised of God in Christ, and therefore in the highest way, before the fulfilment in others, as the effect, and the outward display before every eye in the universe, but there is a present application of the surest character, through apostolic ministration, to God's glory. God is glorified in the Son of man, as the Son of man is glorified; but there are results of the deepest sort which God vouchsafes now to faith, in the administration of which (not of the kingdom merely, as Peter) our apostle had the chief place, and the Christian is entitled to reap the blessing, as heartily and in the Holy Spirit assenting to the truth.

So Bengel, long ago, said tersely enough, “Nae respectu Dei promittentis, Amen respectu credentium.” But to bring the believer into the enjoyment of what God has wrought in Christ more has to be said, and immediately follows. Here it is the firm foundation, not God’s promises as of old, still less the law which proved that man could not make them good, yet all accomplished in Christ, but also as surely verified through Him, for glory to God by us.

The apostle refutes yet more the insinuation of uncertainty in his preaching, by the drawing out, not merely of the verification of the truth, and accomplishment of all God’s promises in Christ, but of our firm association with it all in Him.

“Now he that establisheth us with you16 in Christ, and anointed us is [God], who17 also sealed us, and gave the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” (Ver. 21.) It is not man’s own will or effort that is able to secure us Christward, nor, consequently, is it a mere question of his fickleness, feebleness, or failure in anyway. He that binds us fast to Christ is God; and the emphasis is all the greater, because God is expressed, not objectively, but as a predicate. It is truly surprising, then, that a professed commentator, and a distinguished scholar, should have said that ὁ δὲ βεβ..... ἡμᾶς is the (prefixed) predicate, and θεός the subject; for this is to reverse all that is certain in the language, and to lose the true force of what is here insisted on. Had ὁ δὲ β..... ἡμᾶς been affixed to θεός, instead of prefixed, the sense had been the same, the order of the words in a sentence affecting it only as a matter of emphasis, and in no way disturbing the relation of the subject to the predicate, which it is the chief function of the article to distinguish. Compare

chapter 5:5, where a precisely similar construction occurs. Nor is this a casual mistake, for it re-appears no less distinctly in the comment on Hebrews 3:4, where θεός is said to be the subject, and ὁ πάντα κατασκευάσας the predicate, though it is allowed that the ancient expositors, almost without exception, take q. as predicate, and ὁ π. κ. as a designation of Christ, thus making the passage a proof of His deity. It ought not to be disputed that in all these, or the like, instances, the object before the mind, or subject of each proposition, designated as operating in the way described, as to either the saints or the universe, is declared to be God. Man is excluded by the nature of the case, as in Hebrews; or He that is said so to act is affirmed to be God, for the confirmation of the saints, as here. Had it been ὁ θ. in these cases, the propositions would have been reciprocal, and either might have been viewed as subject or as predicate. But the effect of the absence of the article is to characterise Him who works as is described in each instance. He is divine, is God: a very different statement from saying that God so works.

Here, then, it is laid down that He who firmly attaches us to Christ is God, as elsewhere we are declared to be in Him. Man is weak and vacillating, and yet more in deed than in word; but He who binds fast unto Christ is God, and this, not the strong only, but the weakest, as needing most such securing grace and power. Hence, in a love that rises above all that wounds the spirit, the apostle adds, as coupling the saints in Corinth with himself and Timothy, “He that establisheth us with you.” Christ for both was the impregnable fortress, the rock that never can be moved.

But more than this follows we are “anointed” as believers, we receive the unction from the Holy One, whereby, as John says, we know all things. God anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power the Lord Jesus, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil. (See Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38) To us who believe it is rather energy of communion with His revealed mind; still the Spirit given is of power, and love, and a sound mind; and He that anointed us is not man, but God. Hence, as the apostle with the last hour before his eyes says, the unction as surely abides as it teaches us of all things. It is no transient display of power over Satan outwardly, no qualification of apostles only, as some have thought. It is the permanent privilege of the Christian for his own soul’s entrance into the revealed mind of God; and “the babes” (τὰ παιδία) have it as truly, if not so manifestly, as the most mature. The apostles and prophets of the New Testament received, of course, gift or energy for their work; but they are never said to be “anointed” as such.

But our apostle tells us that God also sealed us, and gave the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” Not as if the Spirit were given at so many distinct epochs according to the difference of His operation. The gift of the Spirit to us, as believing in Christ and resting on His redemption, is really the powerful source of all. He that establishes us in Christ, and anointed us, as we have seen, also sealed us, and gave us the earnest. The Father, even God, sealed the Son of man. This, we can easily understand, was only meet, for He was not only from eternity but as man His Son, the constant and perfect object of His delight. But how could we be sealed who were in sin and wretchedness, the marked

contrast of the Lord Jesus? His redemption completely delivers us from Satan's thraldom, and we are not only born of God and His sons, but washed from our sins in His blood, and sin in the flesh is condemned in His death as a sacrifice, as truly as ourselves forgiven. Hence, in virtue of that work, God also sealed us, and gave the "earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." The Holy Spirit is not only the seal of redemption, but the pledge of the inheritance. The meaning is in no way the Spirit given in measure as the earnest of more. He is the witness of what has been done and accepted on our behalf; He is also the foretaste of the glory that is assuredly to follow. And all things are of God, who sent first His Son, that every promise should be verified, and then His Spirit, that we who believe should be brought into the security, knowledge, and enjoyment of all this blessedness, past, present, or to come, in Christ our Lord.

Having thus turned in grace the Corinthian disparagement of his own word to the praise of the gospel, the apostle next passes, with great solemnity, to explain his real motive for not coming before to their city. "But I call God as witness upon my soul, that to spare you I did not yet come unto Corinth; not that we rule over your faith, but are fellow-workers of your joy, for by faith ye stand." (Vers. 23, 24.) Had he come before, it must have been with a rod. (Cf. 1 Cor. 4:21.) Desirous of uniting them in love, and in a spirit of meekness, he had deferred his coming till grace had wrought self-judgment among them. The delay, and turning elsewhere meanwhile, furnished the occasion for unworthy insinuations, already touched on. It was really as sparing them he did not come; but he carefully guards against the charge of assuming undue authority;

“not that we rule over your faith, but are fellow-workers of your joy.” Nothing is truly done that is not in the soul before God. Even an apostle like Paul or John sought not for a moment to step between the faithful and God. The apostles communicated His mind, that the saints might have the same assurance of it as themselves, and so their joy be full. “For by faith ye stand.” So it must be in order to please God. Without faith it is impossible. It is not by the fear or favour of men, however blessed, that the saints stand, but by faith. A fellow-helper of their joy, he would rather expose himself to the charge of changing his mind, if any were low enough so to think and speak of him, than to deal harshly with them, as he in faithfulness must, had he come as he first purposed. He waited, that the word of God might work its salutary aim, mixed with faith in those who heard it. He wished to do his work with joy, and not groaning, for this would be unprofitable for them. Was this to lord it over them, as proud men might allege? It was to farther their joy of faith, as their servant for Jesus’ sake.

2 Corinthians 2

The apostle now explains more fully his motive for not going before to Corinth. They ought, from 1 Corinthians 4, to have gathered plainly enough why it was. But the flesh never appreciates motives of the Spirit; and the enemy takes pleasure in embroiling the saints, if he fail with those that serve them for Jesus’ sake. Now, however, that grace had begun to work in the Corinthians, the language is modified accordingly. The apostle had then asked if he was to come with a rod, or in love and a spirit of meekness. Here, as he had already stated that it was to spare them he had not as yet come

to Corinth, he follows up with words that show how far from him it was to lord it over their faith, as some might have drawn from his threat of a rod.

“But I judged this for myself not to come again [or back] unto you in grief.18 For if I grieve you, who then [is] he that gladdeneth me, if not he that is grieved by me? And I wrote19 this very thing, that I might not on coming have grief from those from whom I ought to have joy, having trust in you all that my joy is [that] of you all. For out of much tribulation and distress of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not that ye should be grieved, but that ye may know the love that I have very [lit. more] abundantly unto you.” (Vers. 1-4.)

It is a mistake that these words imply a former visit in grief, and therefore a second intermediate and unrecorded one, distinct from the first. The work began, as described in Acts 18. The next visit of which scripture speaks was in Acts 20:2, 3, after both epistles were written — the first from Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:8), the second from Macedonia — but whether from Philippi (as is the traditional idea), or from some other place, as Thessalonica, does not appear. Tradition is certainly wrong in asserting that the first also issued from Philippi, as it may be about the second. 2 Corinthians 12:14, 21; 2 Corinthians 13:1, in no way indicate the fact, but the intention of a second visit, put off because of their state, and in the hope that the delay might give occasion to the intervention of grace, and thus the need of judicial severity be spared, on the apostle’s part, toward many in the assembly. Indeed 2 Corinthians 13:2 seems plainly to indicate that he had not really been a second time: “I have declared beforehand, and say

beforehand, as present the second time, and now absent," etc.

There is no evidence, in my judgment, that he had gone once to correct abuses, and to exercise discipline. He was anxious to avoid any such necessity, and therefore, instead of going as intended, he went to meet Titus, spite of work most attractive to him, that he might know how his first letter had fared at Corinth.

Actually he had not been; this was the third time he had the purpose of going; and it was the putting off the visit when intended which gave rise to the charge of light-mindedness. The change was due to their failure, and in no sense to his. On the contrary, he preferred in love to them to be grossly misconstrued, and so, instead of explaining to others, he decided this for or with himself, not to come back to them in grief.

At that time his visit would have been sorrow all round — to him certainly — at the sight of the saints, divided by party zeal, entangled by fleshly lusts, dabbling with the world, tampering with idolatry, unworthily communicating, disorderly in the assembly, and denying — implicitly at least — fundamental doctrine, and not less surely to them, if he convicted their consciences, and dealt with their state as it deserved. Graciously, therefore, had he deferred his visit till the issue of his first letter appeared, wherein he had brought the light of God to bear on all these evils and more, of which report mainly, not a fresh visit, had apprised him. The good news he had received of the effect produced by his letters opened his heart, and let out the deep affection he had for them, spite of their grievous faults. For he is convinced that their grief was his, as also that his joy

was theirs. What a wondrous power there is in Christ to produce communion in grief over evil, in the joy of grace, above self and its divisive character and consequences! His desire was the happiness of the saints. No wonder, then, he shrank from going where and when his visit must be one of grief. For if I grieve you, who then is it that is to gladden me, if not he that is grieved by me?" That is, none but they could satisfy his heart. What love, and delicacy too! He individualises the saints in this phrase: And I wrote this very thing, that I might not on coming have grief from those from whom I ought to have joy: having trust in you all that my joy is [that] of you all."

It is clear thence that it is not only inflicting, but receiving, grief of which the apostle speaks, as indeed it is always according to God in His church, whatever it be in the world. His motive in writing was the removal of what ought to pain them as it did him, that he and they might at his coming rejoice together, Christ being the spring, who can tolerate nothing offensive to God in His temple, which the saints are. And the circumstances, as well as inward feelings of the apostle, were eminently adapted to bring about the result. "For out of much tribulation and distress of heart I wrote to you with many tears, not that ye should be grieved, but that ye may know the love which I have very abundantly unto you." It was very abundant love, but hardly more than to others, as some conceive.

There is, perhaps, no place where the delicacy, as well as faithfulness, of the apostle appears more than in dealing with the case which had so deeply pained his heart, in view of the dishonour done to the Lord at Corinth. For if it betrayed how low the unjudged flesh of

a Christian might carry him, it had also discovered the low state of the assembly, and made it a special trial to him who loved them, and a special danger for those who were otherwise alienated. Nevertheless, the grace and truth which came in Christ wrought so mightily by the Holy Spirit in this blessed servant, that even the light-minded Corinthians were roused to repentance quite as decidedly as to activity in discipline; and so far communion was restored between them and the apostle. It ought to be doubted that, as he commanded them to put away the wicked person from among themselves, they could not but bow, purging out the old leaven, that they might be a new lump, as they were unleavened. The paschal sacrifice of Christ is inseparable from the feast of unleavened bread we have to celebrate here below. We cannot shirk the responsibility, if we enjoy the privilege. Siincerity and truth must characterise the believer.

But if the saints in Corinth were only of late awakened to feel and act with honour and holy resentment at such an outrage in God’s temple, there was danger now of a strong reaction. Severity is as little according to Christ as laxity or indifference; and those who needed such a powerful appeal to arouse them to vindicate the injured name of the Lord, were now disposed to an extreme of judicial sternness, as far from the grace of the apostle, as before from his care for holiness. Thus fellowship of heart was imperilled from the opposite side.

The apostle, however, seizes on what was good, through the action of the Spirit in them, to labour for still more and better. Recovery from a low state is rarely immediate. Correction is needed there, as well as here; and the very fact that the call to righteousness is again

heard, may, for the time, so pre-occupy the soul, that love cannot yet act freely. So it was at Corinth, till he who so blessedly represented the Master laid his hands again upon their eyes, which as yet saw men like trees walking, that, restored fully, they might look on all clearly. He had written out of much tribulation and distress of heart to them, with many tears, which refuted the charge of either levity or self-exaltation; not that they might be grieved, but that they might know his very abundant love toward them. Now he turns to the one in question, who had grieved him from the first tidings of the sin, since the first epistle had been used to put his and their sin in the light of God before their consciences.

“But if any one hath grieved, he hath grieved not me, but in part (that I may not press heavily) all of you. Sufficient to such an one [is] this rebuke, which [is] by the many; so that, on the contrary, ye should rather forgive and comfort, lest somehow such an one be swallowed up with excessive grief. Wherefore I exhort you to ratify love toward him. For I wrote also for this, and that I might know the proof of you, whether as to all things ye are obedient. But to whom ye forgive anything, I also; for I too, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, [do so] for your sake, in Christ’s person, that we might not be overreached by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his devices.” (Vers. 5-11.)

The sorrow which had filled the apostle’s heart had, more or less, overspread the assembly; and such is the feeling which becomes it. If the godly Israelite so took up and confessed the sins of the people, how much more those in a far nearer relation to the Lord? Yet we see it deeply in Moses and Joshua, in Hezekiah and Josiah, in

Daniel and Ezra. So now grace had communicated to the saints, in measure, the apostle's grief at the Corinthian scandal: not that they, if any, felt so deeply as he, but that he could speak of them all as affected similarly with himself. Thus the hearts of all would be conciliated, and even he that had caused the grief would feel that there was in the apostle anything but the wish to overwhelm him. He adds that the rebuke or punishment already inflicted of the many was enough. This would not have been so if the sentence of excision had not been carried out. Not a word intimates that a. mere reproof short of it had arrested the evil, and brought the evil-doer to repentance. The notion, therefore, of the French Reformers (Calvin, Beza, etc.), or others, to this effect is not only unfounded but unworthy also; for as the first epistle had peremptorily insisted on putting away the offender, the second is equally plain that mutual confidence was in measure restored by their decision and self-judgment in this very case. Verse 9, in particular, is inconsistent with anything less, not to speak of verses 7, 8, and indeed others elsewhere. Nor does verse 6 fairly bear the meaning that he is distinguishing another sort of censure which the Corinthians had administered from the excommunication he had himself enjoined; but that what was already done in accordance with inspired injunctions had effected its purpose, and should not last longer. This is entirely confirmed by the call that follows, rather to forgive and comfort, lest perhaps if he continued under so terrible a sentence, broken down as he was, he should be swallowed up with excessive grief. Wherefore he beseeches the saints to ratify love, as they had already testified abhorrence of the sin, by a formal act of the assembly. Thus too would the saints prove

their obedience in all respects, in gracious restoration of the penitent, as before in solemn judgment of his heinous sin; and the apostle also had all this in view when he wrote both epistles.

But it is of deep moment to mark and learn that, though he has to awaken the assembly both to judge and to restore, for they had failed in both respects, he will have them to feel and act aright, joining them in their acts, and in no way acting for them. Hence he does not at all speak as a spiritual dictator, however real and great the authority given him of the Lord, as he takes pains to allege in both doctrine and discipline. “But to whom ye forgive anything, I also [forgive]; for also I, what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, [do so] for your sake in Christ’s person, that we should not be overreached by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his thoughts.” It would have been no adequate healing of the assembly to have forgiven the Corinthian offender because the apostle had done so, and commanded it. When the flagrant evil was not judged, he did command excommunication; but when grace had wrought all round in estimating as well as dealing with what was so humbling, he will have them to forgive, and go with them in it. It is not, therefore, “whom I forgive, ye also,” but “to whom ye forgive anything, I also.” He is most careful to press their own place of ratifying love, even when apostolically laying down their duty, that he might have fellowship with them throughout. In the prerogative of mercy he would follow, and what he had forgiven, if he had forgiven aught, do it on their account in Christ’s person. How blessed the seal of authority, and how gracious the sanction! May we cherish such a scene of divine affections in presence of good and of

evil. Our weakness is immense, the difficulty as various as humanly insuperable, the danger from Satan's wiles constant; but greater is He that is in the saints than he that is in the world; and we know that the enemy's thoughts and designs are levelled pre-eminently at God's assembly, the only divine society on earth.

The apostle resumes for a moment the account of his course, but the aim is to testify his affectionate concern for the Corinthian saints who misjudged him, and, failing in love themselves, saw not his love which spared them, as much as it sought their blessing to the Lord's glory.

"Now when I came unto the Troad for the gospel of Christ, a door being opened to me in [the] Lord, I had no rest in my spirit at not finding Titus, my brother; but having taken leave of them, I went forth unto Macedonia. But thanks [be] to God that always leadeth us in triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the odour of his knowledge through us in every place. Because we are a sweet odour of Christ to God in those to be saved, and in those that perish: to the one an odour from20 death unto death, but to the others an odour from21 life unto life; and who [is] sufficient for these things? For we are not as the many, retailing the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, before God, we speak in Christ." (Vers. 12-17.)

We see two things here: the apostle's deep value for the gospel; his still deeper value for the saints as in danger of compromising Christ. Hence, whatever his purpose in coming into a new region, and in the face of a distinct opening for the work of reaching souls outside, he could not rest without hearing of those souls, so dear to him for the Lord's sake, and so exposed to Satan's wiles. He

had hoped to have heard news of Corinth through Titus; but Titus he did not find; and so, turning his back on those on the eastern side where he then was, he repairs to Macedonia. His heart was on the saints. Anxiety for the assembly decided him to abandon for the time even so promising a field for the gospel. The church has the nearest claim, and the apostle acts on it. It was not only that the letter he had written bore witness of his love for them, and grief over the grave circumstances of the Corinthian assembly, but also his relinquishment of the gospel work he so valued, and this spite of the opening of a door in the Lord. His heart was tried greatly, as he thought of the saints and of his own letter. Would they accept it as of God, and judge themselves by the light? Would they resent his plain and searching, however affectionate, appeals? The situation was most critical. Taking leave, then, of the saints in Troas, he goes forth where he hoped to hear the most speedy and authentic tidings of their state, and the effect of his own letter.

But, instead of stopping to describe the intelligence conveyed by Titus, the apostle breaks forth into a burst of praise and thanksgiving. It was, no doubt, characteristic of his deep feeling and immediate appreciation that he should thus turn from the human instrument to His grace who had wrought such a happy result, where things were so painful and perilous; but no means can be conceived more admirably adapted to express at once what grace had effected in the Corinthian saints, nor any more becoming a servant of Christ. There is thus the complete absence of self-vindication, and there is no credit taken for superior wisdom.

The gracious power of God is celebrated immediately as His victory. Not merely is every means attributed to Him, and the blessing, from Him, which piety would always feel and utter gladly, but he speaks in the most forcible way of God always leading us in triumph in the Christ. The best proof of its peculiarity is that so many commentators, Protestant and Catholic alike, pare down and alter the meaning. Among the rest, our own Authorised translation was so affected by this impression, that they rendered θριαμβεύειν, “to cause to triumph,” instead of lead in triumph, as they should. The other has been attempted to be sustained by the Hellenistic causative usage of μαθητεύειν, βασιλεύειν, κατηλεύειν, and χορεύειν, even in classical Greek. But the usage of the apostle in Colossians 2:5 is adverse, nor am I aware of a single instance in which it can be proved to be ever thus employed. Besides, it really weakens, if it does not destroy, the beauty of the apostle’s image, and makes it to be his triumph rather than God’s. The one would be a rather unseasonable, and perhaps galling, reminder to the Corinthians that he was as right as they were wrong; the other, a singularly beautiful, though bold, prediction of a divine victory, in which he has part as a willing captive, or part of the train.

There is no over-colouring of the figure, no representation of himself as humbled and conquered, still less any reference to their fighting against God or His servant. But he turns his joy over their being brought to repentance, and a recognition of his apostolic authority, as well as of his loving services, into a thanksgiving to God, who, instead of letting him feel his abandonment of evangelistic work, always loads us in triumph in the Christ, and makes manifest the odour of

His knowledge through us in every place. The allusion is to a Roman triumph, where aromatics were burnt profusely; and on this, too, he seizes to illustrate the going forth everywhere around of his testimony to Christ in the gospel. But the sweet perfumes in a triumphal procession were accompanied by life to some of the captives, and by death to others; and this is as naturally as powerfully turned to point the twofold issues of the gospel.

The unbelieving Jew or Gentile saw no more in Jesus crucified than a dead man; how could the message founded on Him be of power to such? They might not deny the gracious words of it, any more than of Christ in the synagogue of Nazareth, where He announced His mission in the wondrous citation from Isaiah 61; yet they saw not, heard not, God in either. But as God delighted in His Son, a Saviour, so He pronounced beautiful the feet of those that announced glad tidings of peace, of those that announce glad tidings of good things; and so, too, He smells a savour of rest sweeter than that of Noah's offering, or any other. "Because," says the apostle, "we are a sweet odour of Christ to God in those to be saved, and in those that perish;" and this he explains carefully: "to the one an odour from death unto death," which we have seen; "but to the other an odour from life unto life." Such is the message where it is mixed with faith; for faith sees and hears Him as the Son of God, yet Son of man, who died for man, for sins, but rose in the power of an endless life, that we might live also, and live of His life, where sin can never enter, nor death have dominion more.

No wonder, as the apostle weighs the responsibility of a service so blessed on the one side, so tremendous on the

other, that he exclaims, “And who [is] sufficient for these things?” For if the gospel is a word of delivering grace, it causes the truth to shine out so as to intensify the servant’s estimate of responsibility. This is just what should be — full liberty imparted, instead of bondage; but solemn responsibility, realised as it never was before, and could not be in any other way. But here the mass of the Corinthians sadly fell short, not the apostle, whom they had slighted in their self-sufficient folly. “For we are not, as the many, retailing (or, adulterating) the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as of God, before God, we speak in Christ.” He did not, like the many, traffic in the word of God; but as of transparency, nor this only, but as of God, and this too with a present sense of having to do with Him, as all must later, “before God,” “we speak in Christ,” which is far more intimate and forcible than merely of Him. Yet even such solemn words did not hinder men, and even saints, too soon and down to our day, to make the ministry of the gospel a stepping-stone to earthly gain and worldly honour, in manifest discord with the cross of Christ, and to the utter eclipse of His heavenly glory, not to speak of the grievous loss of all concerned.

2 Corinthians 3

From this the apostle turns in a peculiarly touching way to the saints at Corinth. His spirit felt that his last allusions to a triumph, in contrast with those who trafficked in truth (never then given out with genuine purity), might expose to unkind personality. He therefore, in disclaiming the need of human commendation in any form, lets out what grace forms in the heart before contrasting the law with the gospel.

11 Begin we again to commend ourselves? or22 need we, as some, recommendatory epistles unto you or23 from you? Ye are our epistle inscribed in our24 hearts, known and read by all men, being manifested that ye are Christ's epistle ministered by us, having been inscribed, not with ink, but [the] Spirit of [the] living God, not on tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of [the] heart (or, hearts) 25. And such confidence have we through the Christ toward God; not that we are competent from ourselves to reckon anything as of ourselves, but our competency [is] of God, who also made us competent [as] servants of [the] new covenant, not of letter but of spirit, for the letter killeth but the spirit quickeneth." (Vers. 1-6.)

It is plain that there was then, as now, the practice of giving and receiving letters in commending stranger brethren to the assemblies. And a valuable means of introduction as well as guard it is, provided we hold it in spirit, not in letter: otherwise we might fail doubly, in refusing those who ought to be received, where circumstances have hindered the requisite voucher, and in receiving those who, being deceivers, can supply themselves with any letter which may the more effectually mislead. The aim of all such provisions is to afford adequate testimony to the assembly of God, which is in no way bound to a form however excellent, if wanting, provided perchance other means of godly satisfaction leave no reasonable hesitation to those who judge fairly and in love. It is mischievous when that which God uses for our mutual comfort is perverted by legalism into an instrument of spiritual torture, as may be sometimes the lack of a commendatory note, or some kindred informality.

But the apostle turns, from the supposed imputation of seeking to commend himself, to foster in the Corinthian saints somewhat of the love which burned so warmly in his own bosom. If he, if an apostle, could be supposed to need a commendatory epistle, surely not Paul to or from the assembly in Corinth! As he adds, with as much beauty as affection, “Ye are our epistle,” not in process of being “written,” but this already done and abidingly (ἐγγεγραμμένη) “in our hearts,” whereas it was but becoming “known and read by all men,” as was also their manifestation that they were Christ’s epistle, “ministered” as a past fact (διακονηθεῖσα) by us, “written” as it has been and was (ἐγγεγραμμένη) “not with ink, but the living God’s Spirit,” not on tablets of stone, but on fleshy tablets — hearts, or of the heart.

It was a wonderful thing to call any company of saints in this world Paul’s epistle, that which set forth his mind and heart, the fruit of his testimony in the Spirit to the world. Such he declares the Corinthian assembly to be, no mere tongue-work this, but “written in our hearts,” yet without doubt intended for men generally to learn by, as he says, “known and read by all men.” Such is the church, not a thing of creedism, or a subscription to paper-and-ink articles, however pure in their place, but an epistle to set forth livingly what the apostle taught and felt. Here he goes farther still; for even of those saints, who had caused him such shame and pain, but now consolation and joy, he does not hesitate to say that they were manifestly showing themselves to be Christ’s epistle ministered by him. Paul might be the means, but Christ was the end; and just as God wrote the law on stone for Israel, so now does the Spirit grave Christ on the fleshy tablets of the Christian’s heart, that the world

may read Christ in the church. It will be noticed too, that this epistle says they are; it is no mere question of a duty, but of a positive relationship which is the ground of the duty. If we are Christ's epistle, as the apostle declares to the Corinthians, we should assuredly convey His mind and affections truly and without blot. The truth abides for us, which wrought on them; and so does the Spirit of the living God; and thus we are inexcusable in our failure. At least may we own and feel it, that grace may work in us as in those who had fallen so short!

"And such confidence have we through the Christ toward God." Christianity not only excludes despair but gives assurance, and this on the firmest ground with God, even Christ, whose work puts the believer into the same acceptance, nearness, and favour as our Lord enjoyed through His own personal relationship and perfection as man. This is the meaning, aim, and effect of a Saviour such as He is: less than this would be to slight Him and His work, and the new creation and relationships which are the fruit of it. But here the apostle speaks of confidence as regards his ministry, which is no less true and flows from the same grace. For it is all the expression of God's love in Christ to us and to Christ in the delight of His glorification of God; and in the power of one so able to give it effect as the Holy Spirit. Therefore the apostle could not doubt, but cherishes a confidence, measured by God's estimate of what was due to Christ whom He had sent to testify and prove His love, and now had glorified on high in witness of the perfection of His work. But along with it goes the most earnest disclaimer of any intrinsic competency, while owning it given of God to serve in new covenant order, but even here of spirit, not of letter. For literally it

remains to be applied to the houses of Israel and of Judah, though the blood is shed and accepted, on which its efficacy rests. But this only the more suits the genius of Christianity, where the principles stand out in the light, and the truth is told plainly as here: “for the letter killeth, but the spirit [that is, the mind of God couched under the forms which unbelief never seizes] quickeneth.” And this is universally true; for if the letter were more glaringly perilous of old, there is always the danger of deserting the spirit for it, even under the gospel.

The apostle proceeds next, in a long parenthesis (7-16) to contrast the respective services of the law and of the gospel, the ever rising debate wherever Christ is named and known. And no wonder, for sovereign grace is not natural to the heart, though it alone reveals God fully. The believer himself never keeps grace fresh, pure, or even true, save as consciously in God’s presence, with Christ before him. As in Christ thus, it is simple and appreciated as the one principle and power which suits either God on the one hand, or those He saves on the other. Grace alone puts each in the place which befits them. But the effect or assumption of the mind even in the believer to take up grace and reason it out, apart from present dependence, is as bad or worse than misuse of the law; for conscience answers to the law when it condemns every evil way, but faith is needed for grace. Outside God’s presence it is but allowance of sin. In His presence grace deals with sin far more overwhelmingly than law, as is evident in the cross of Christ. Only there can the believer enjoy grace safely, happily, and holily: and there is no possibility of having peace in His presence but through grace — grace

reigning through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

“But if the ministry of death in letter,26 graven on stones, came in with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently toward the face of Moses for the glory of his face, that was to be done away, how shall not the ministry of the Spirit more be in glory? For if the ministry of condemnation [have]27 glory, much more doth the ministry of righteousness abound in glory. For even that which hath been glorified, hath not28 been glorified in this respect on account of the surpassing glory. For if that to be done away [was] with glory, much more what abideth [is] in glory.”

It is of moment to notice that the apostle reasons here on Exodus 34 not on Exodus 20 as in Hebrews 12 It is a question, not of law pure and simple, when God’s voice shook the earth, with a sight of terror which caused even Moses to be full of trembling; but of law when given the second time, accompanied by the mercy which not only forgave but accepted mediation. It was a mixture of law with grace, and precisely what people now conceive to be Christianity. But this is what is designated the ministry of death in letter, engraven on stones. For on the second time, not on the first, it was introduced with glory (ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ) and then, not before, was there any difficulty for the sons of Israel steadily to gaze at his face. Only then are we told that the skin of the face of Moses shone (Ex. 34), and that the Israelites were afraid to come nigh him. It was the glory of Jehovah which caused his face thus to shine, an effect entirely peculiar to the second occasion. Nevertheless this is styled “the ministry of death.” The mercy which had spared Israel did not alter its character, nor did the

glory which shone in the Mediator's face. How different is that which the Spirit now ministers in a dead, risen, and glorified Christ! The reflection of glory in Moses' case was but a passing fact: it was neither intrinsic nor permanent, but to be done away. Not so Christ's. Here all that is the fruit of His work abides. It has everlasting value. It is no question of letter, nor of graving on stones, but of a divine Saviour yet a man, who has glorified God atoningly as to sin, not in living obedience only but up to death, the death of the cross, and is thereon glorified in heaven, yea, in God Himself, and gives the believer, once a wretched, guilty, and lost sinner, now washed, sanctified and justified, a righteous title to stand in perfect grace, to be with Him in glory, one with Him even now by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. This is the gospel, this the ministry of the Spirit which abides and is assuredly abundant "in glory."

But the law requires righteousness, and man being a sinner cannot yield it. The law is necessarily, therefore, a ministry of death (ver. 7), and the more brightly God's goodness shines, the worse it is for the sinner, for he is only the more proved worthless and guilty. In the gospel righteousness is revealed to faith, not required: for Christ Himself is the righteousness of the believer, and the work was done and accepted before God sent out the gospel of His grace to man. The Spirit, therefore, testifies to a man at God's right hand, who suffered once for sins on the cross, and declared that by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. Hence the Holy Spirit, as He sealed Christ the righteous One without blood when on earth, now seals us when washed from our sins in His blood, and rests on us as the Spirit

of glory and of God. (Ver. 8.) We are put, therefore, in association with Christ on high and await His coming to bring us there. The law, on the contrary, not only hills but condemns; it brings sense of guilt on the conscience, and God as a judge of the evil actually done. Hence it can only be a ministry of condemnation (ver. 9), as well as of death, whatever the glory that marked its enactment; whereas the gospel is the ministry of righteousness already accomplished in Christ and the portion of the believer; and that righteousness abides unchanged and glorious in Christ above. Hence the ministry of the Spirit is also that of righteousness.

As the righteousness is a fact of free grace in One who loves no perfectly, so has the glory the same attraction, unlike the glory which alarmed Israel, even in the face of Moses. The light which shines from Christ glorified speaks of the efficacy of His sacrifice; the brighter the light, the clearer the proof that our every sin is cleansed away by His blood. It is the light of divine glory, doubtless, but flowing from redemption. His title to be in heaven is not His person only, but the work which God His Father gave Him to do, that as surely as we know Him in the Father, we should also know that we are in Him and He in us. Most wondrous! yet the simple truth of Christ and the Christian. But what is so wonderful as the truth? Yet Christ accounts for it all, and His work brings us who believe into it all. Such is grace in the ministry of the Spirit by righteousness.

And as the glory of God’s grace in Christ completely dims by excess of brightness His glory in the law (ver. 10), so also does the transitory or temporary character of the latter proclaim its incomparable inferiority to the former which abides (ver. 15), as indeed it ought;

inasmuch as it flows from and expresses the will of God, while the other only condemns and executes sentence on the evil of man already fallen and disobedient.

A few details may be useful in helping the reader to appreciate the remarkably compressed phraseology of these verses. ἐγενήθη ἐν δόξῃ means that the law was introduced in or with glory, rather than that it existed in glory. The verb is changed when we come to the Spirit and His ministry, subsisting in glory. It is an error, however, to suppose that the future ἔσται is one of time; it is rather of inference. There is no allusion here to the coming glory. The apostle points emphatically to what the Spirit is ministering now. It is hard to express, but important to bear in mind, the abstract nature of the contrast , τὸ καταργούμενον and τὸ μένόν, the present participle of character, apart from time, not of actual fact.

Lastly, it is at best oversight to affirm that

διὰ δόξης and

ἐν δόξῃ present a mere variation of expressions without a difference of meaning. Never does scripture thus change words without a fresh thought and a distinct purpose. ἐν δ. is admirably adapted when connected (not with ἐγενήθη, but) with μένον, to set forth permanence of glory;

διὰ δ. a mere accompanying condition of what was to pass away. Romans 3:30; 5:10, prove difference, not sameness, of force, whatever Winer may say (Moulton’s edition, pp. 453, 512), or the commentators misled by such laxity, as Alford, Hodge, etc.

This leads the apostle in the Spirit to apply the incident of Moses with and without a veil, as before of the glory of his face. He glories that in the gospel all is open. It is no longer the unhappy though wholesome detection of sin in man, but the plain revelation of good from God in Christ, and this righteously through His cross, yea, gloriously in His place at God's right hand in heaven: the ground of our association with heaven now, and of glory there not in spirit only but in body at His coming. In Judaism man could not bear to hear the truth, which was the sentence of death to flesh; in Gentilism all was doubt or deception. In the gospel we can speak plainly: it is God's good news of His Son. There is no reason or motive for reserve, but just the contrary. We cannot be too open. So the love of God who gave such a treasure would have it. Leave darkness to Rabbis and philosophers, who love it rather than light.

"Having then such hope we use much openness of speech: and not as Moses used to put a veil on his own face, that the sons of Israel should not look stedfastly unto the end of that to be done away, But their thoughts were darkened [lit. hardened]; for until this very day the same veil at the reading of the old covenant abideth unremoved [lit. unveiled], which in Christ is done away. 29 But unto this day when Moses is read, a veil lieth upon their heart. But whenever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken off." (Ver. 12-16.)

Christianity is no system of restraint on evil in the first man, with ordinances suited to the flesh in the world, and God afar off in the dark, but founded on the grace of Christ, who, after establishing righteousness by the cross, is gone up into heavenly glory, and is ministered by the Holy Ghost in power. Hence the unseen, the

future, and the everlasting converge on the believer now; and having such a hope one can be thoroughly outspoken: there are the strongest motives for openness in every way, in contrast with the dimness, distance, and reserve of the law. Not only did God in Christ come down to man, but, now that his evil has been judicially and conclusively dealt with in the cross, man can go up — nay, has already sat down at His right hand — in the person of our Saviour and Head. The accomplishment of redemption, as it closed the ministry of death, opened the way and became the basis of the ministry of the Spirit, to abide in glory. The previous state of concealment, where man had such reason to dread the sight of glory according to the law, is set forth in Moses putting a veil on his face when he spoke with the children of Israel outside.30 whereas he in variably put it off whenever he went in before Jehovah.

The christian position is in the fullest contrast with that of Israel, to which tradition and human thoughts of unbelief would ever in principle reduce us. It suits reason and conscience guided by it, and our estimate of self as well as of God, where Christ and His work have no distinctive and commanding place. Hence not only do the utmost extremes meet here, popish and puritanical, but also that via media, which pleases the moderate men of all parties, rationalist or nonconformist, who on the one hand rightly venerate the law as clothed with God’s authority, but on the other see not the wholly new position grace has placed us in by redemption, answering to Christ glorified on high, who has sent down the Spirit that we might enjoy it to the full, and walk accordingly. For we find our privilege Godward typified in Moses unveiled, not with the veil on. We

behold Christ and His work in the ritualistic system, which conveyed to the Israelite only precepts to kill a lamb, a goat, or a bullock, with the blood brought in before God, and to sprinkle themselves with the water of separation, or the like. The law made nothing perfect. It (and not the speculative thought of the Greek, nor the political wisdom of Rome) was the true nursery of man in his nonage, the divine pro-paedeutic, shutting up to the faith about to be revealed.

Israel through unbelief slighted grace when shown to them abundantly, and forgot the promises which God had made to the fathers, which faith would have remembered and felt the need of. They therefore doubted not for a moment their ability to keep His law, and so maintain their place with Him. Granted that this was their deepest ignorance, both of God as a judge according to law, and of themselves as guilty and powerless sinners; and that scripture reveals their ruin under law, that the Gentile should avoid the snare and find their resource, strength, and blessing, all and only in Christ by God's sovereign grace. How awful then the darkness which has deliberately put Christendom back into the self-same position of law, as the rule of people to live by, after the proclamation of God's mercy! This is what not only the multitude believe but the doctors have taught, Protestant no less than popish; this is the prevalent doctrine, alike Presbyterian and Prelatical, Methodist or Congregational. It is the mind active and exercised on what God used as a probationary system, but as unable to look to the end of it as the Jew of old, rebellious against its transitory character, and blind to the surpassing glory of what is now revealed in Christ.

It is solemn to reflect on those once the people of God, now Lo-Ammi, in zeal for their forms rejecting Christ who gives them their real meaning and chief, if not only, value. But so it is and must be. How could the infinite gift of the Son of God, and then the witness of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, in virtue of redemption, have, if refused, any other consequence than utter ruin for those who have despised God? It is the rejection of God's fullest grace and heavenly glory, not merely of the law which demanded and defined a man's duty. God would be a partner to His own utter dishonour if He passed by the refusal of His Son dying in love for man's sin, or despite to the Spirit of grace who testifies of it and Him. This the Jews did formally, before God swept them from their land by the Romans, not because the scriptures are not express as to Christ and His work, but because of their own unbelief. "But unto this day, when Moses is being read, a veil lieth upon their heart." (Ver. 15.)

It is humbling however to know that their hardening is but the shadow of a guiltier and incomparably wider unbelief which is settling down on Christendom, not profane only but even religious after the flesh, into more and more dense delusion and self-complacency in resistance of the Holy Spirit and an ignorant contempt of Christ's glory as of our own portion in and with Him. So proceeded the Jew with his darkened thoughts till divine judgment fell on their temple and capital. Their (it was no longer God's) house was left to them desolate; yet do they persist in their most ruinous infatuation, to be punished with a yet more awful tribulation, not (thank God) for ever but till they say, as they will ere long, Blessed He that cometh in the name of Jehovah,

and own in their rejected Messiah their Lord and their God. “Whenever it shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken off.”31 (Ver. 16.) Alas! it is not so with Babylon as with Jerusalem. For the Gentile city of confusion there will be exterminating judgment without Lope of recovery. It behoves then all the faithful to beware of the evils which end in such strokes from God; it becomes them to inquire whether they may not have fellowship with her sins, which dishonour the excellent name which He called upon them. To the law and to the testimony: if men speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in (or morning for) them.

“Until this very day,” says the apostle, “the same veil at the reading of the old covenant abideth unremoved, which in Christ is done away.” (Ver. 14.) So it was and so it is, but it is graver still and no less sure, that the same veil rests on the hearts of the baptised at the reading of the latest revelation of God, when they refuse to submit to the righteousness of God, and their eyes and hearts are turned away to self, or to the church so called, from the only true Light. They do not truly acknowledge the Son, nor own the present efficacy of His work. The veil will envelop the heart for them (perhaps we may say) no less than for Israel; and what greater danger can there be than that such darkness should prevail where Paul is read no less, yea, far more, than Moses? Is it not that, though it be for the Gentile the day of grace, their thoughts are increasingly darkened? Those born of God will no doubt come out of Babylon; for His grace will work, and it may be in ways we little anticipate, to extricate souls that they may await His Son from heaven. But there is no revival, no restoration, for corrupted Christendom. It is salt that has lost its savour,

fit neither for land nor for dunghill, only to be cast out, or burnt with fire, recompensed at last as the great city recompensed during her unrighteous career. For strong is the Lord God that judges her.

The central portion of the chapter, from verse 7, contains not only the remarkable allusion to Moses veiled and unveiled, but the contrast between the ministry of letter in the law with that of the Spirit. The parenthesis being closed, he forthwith recurs to that contrast of letter and spirit which preceded it. “Now the Lord is the spirit, but where the Spirit of the Lord [is, there is] liberty.” (Ver. 17) Scarce any scripture shows more instructively than this the necessity of understanding the mind of God, in order even to present it correctly in form. For it is an utter mistake to give “the spirit” in the first clause a capital letter, which would imply the Holy Ghost to be meant; and where would be the sense, where so much as the orthodoxy, of identifying the Lord with the Holy Ghost?32 To me the meaning, without doubt, is that the Lord Jesus constitutes the spirit of the forms and figures and other communications of the old covenant. These, if taken in the letter, killed; if in the spirit, quickened. “The Lord” was their real scope; and now this comes out into the fullest evidence. Faith sees in Him contrast with Adam, analogy with Abel; the light of which shines even on Cain and Lamech. Yet more manifestly do we see types of Him in Joseph and Moses, and in that vast system of sacrifice and priesthood which, coming in by Moses, furnished those shadows so abundantly. Unbelief never laid hold of the coming One, faith always did; though it might not apprehend the bearing of all, nor perhaps fully of anything, till He actually died and rose. But “the

Lord is the spirit," and the new testimony is so precise, that there is no excuse for misapprehending the old longer. "The true Light now shineth," and "we who were once darkness are now light in the Lord." In the light we walk, and we ought to walk as children of it; and an immense help it is to our souls intelligently to apprehend the Lord in every part of the word. It is this which gives the deepest interest, and truest solemnity, and living power, to every part of the Old Testament. Thus only have we communion with the mind of God with positive and growing blessing to our own souls. Now that He is revealed, all is plain.

But there is more than this, for "where the Spirit of the Lord [is, there is] liberty." Here the truth requires that there should be a capital, for the apostle means not merely the true inner bearing of what was communicated of old, but the presence and power of the Holy Ghost now; and He is not a spirit of bondage unto fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind; not a spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of the Son, whom God had sent into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Hence the effect is liberty, not alone because it is the Son that makes us free, but the Spirit of life in Him risen from the dead, after the mighty work in which God, sending Jesus in the likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. Thus all was condemned that could be condemned, and we by grace are delivered — free indeed. "Where the Spirit of the Lord [is, there is] liberty," as opposed to Gentile license as to Jewish bondage.

It is liberty to do the will of God, "for sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace." Yet do we yield ourselves slaves for obedience;

and having got our freedom from sin, and become slaves to God, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life. We are no longer in the flesh, and are clear from the law, so that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in oldness of letter. “Where the Spirit of the Lord [is, there33 is] liberty.” It is not yet the liberty of the glory of the children of God; it is the liberty of grace before glory dawns at Christ’s coming.

But we are creatures, though a new creation in Christ, and we need an object that we maybe kept and grow, and be formed and fashioned spiritually according to God, while here below. Without the cross of Christ all this were vain; yet are we not called simply to be at the foot of the cross, or to behold no object but Jesus Christ crucified, as men misuse the passage. Not so; “but we all beholding34 the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from [the] Lord [the] Spirit.” Such is the present business, we may say, of the Christian. It is alike the duty and the privilege of all Christians, not the perquisite of a favoured few who attain to it. It is not a state reached in a moment by an act of faith, but a gradual process, which ought to characterise every Christian all the way through. At the coming of Christ we shall be conformed to His image — that of the Son, the First-born among many brethren. Meanwhile thus does “the Lord the Spirit” (for such, I suppose, is the meaning in the last clause) work in us from glory to glory, as all that Christ is glorified on high becomes more familiar and real to our souls by faith. We need, most assuredly, the lowly grace which came down as a servant, obeying to the uttermost, even to the death of the cross, if we would have the mind in us which was

also in Christ Jesus. But, blessed and indispensable as it is thus to know His love, faith in the Christian does not rest there, nor ought it, but, holding all this fast, to look on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, and thus be changed, according to the Same image, from glory to glory. For the Spirit, though Lord equally with the Father and the Son, does not work independently of Christ, but by presenting Him to us, from first to last.

It is scarcely needful to add, that one rejects the translation of the closing phrase, which pleases Olshausen, De Wette, Meyer, etc., “Lord of the Spirit,” as being clearly against the truth of scripture — a serious fault in a Subject of this kind. So Macknight, who paraphrases it, “the Lord of the covenant of the Spirit,” but those who expect either spiritual intelligence or sound scholarship from that divine, must be bitterly and uniformly disappointed. Dr. Thomas F. Middleton, in his able “Doctrine of the Greek Article,” mistakes the margin of the Authorised Version, which agrees with my view against its own text. So Luther, Beza, etc., had rendered it. The reader may compare ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρός (Gal. 1:2; Eph. 6:23), and analogous phrases in many other passages.

2 Corinthians 4

The apostle returns to the manner and spirit of his service in the gospel. Such a hope, such glory, demands and by grace inspires good courage, as well as conduct, of a divine sort. “On this account, having this ministry, according as we obtained mercy, we faint35 not, but refused the hidden things of shame, not walking in deceit, nor guilefully using the word of God, but by the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to

every conscience of men in the sight of God. But if even our gospel is veiled, in those that perish it is veiled, in whom the god of this age blinded the minds [or, thoughts] of the faithless, that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is [the] image of God, should not shine forth." (Vers. 1-4.)

It was not only the surpassing and abiding excellence of this ministry, but the possession of it, which touched the heart with the sense of divine mercy, and took away all disposition to be craven-hearted in presence of the gravest difficulties, and the keenest and constant sufferings. It is true that the Corinthians knew but little of such experience, but therefore was it the more needful that the apostle, who knew little else here below, should bring it out clearly. On the other hand, men admire cleverness in baffling adversaries, and in evading dangers or difficulties, alas! too often in glossing over what cannot bear the light, and in turning aside the edge of what exposes and condemns. Here also the saints at Corinth were not without the contagion of their city and its schools. Could they, like the apostle, say that they refused the secret things of shame? — that they did not walk in trickery? — that they did not falsify the word of God? Some among them certainly gave too much appearance of being thus lacking in the faith that counts on God, and declines secret influence, and shrewd, if not unscrupulous, plans after the flesh. The ways of the servant should harmonise with His blessed service, as they did in Paul's case, leaving to the children of darkness all that shrinks from the light, which it does not suit, no less than evil surmisings of the good they cannot sympathise with. It is not only what is scandalous, but all cunning, which is abhorrent to

Christ, who needs nothing that is not of the Spirit. And if Satan lures us to the path of selfseeking, the desire to win others soon slips from hesitation into a guileful handling of that word which breathes only light and love, like its source.

The apostle, far from uncertainty in his own soul, acted and spoke in the consciousness of divine authority, as he says, “by the manifestation of the truth” (what a blessing in a world of darkness!) “commending ourselves to every conscience of men in the sight of God.” Activity of mind, which likes to propagate its ideas, and to produce common action, was not wanting at Corinth; but where was this conscious possession of truth which formed the ways in accordance with it, an cl sought no other influence, but only thus in love to appeal to conscience in God’s sight? To shine before men, to gain applause, to have a party, are snares to avoid, unworthy of Christ’s servants. To seek, or even to receive, glory one of another, instead of seeking the glory which is from the only God, is the ruin of faith, and wrought not in the Jewish unbeliever, but in many a Corinthian believer. The apostle, in unwearied love, and unquailing before difficulties, and unflinching in candour, pressed the truth in season, out of season, whether men heard or forbore, assured that, while he preached as in God’s presence, every conscience bowed inwardly, even if the will were set on its own way in defiance of God.

Moreover, the vividness of the heavenly vision, to which he was not disobedient, reproduced itself by the Spirit in his evangelising. All was out, without disguise, radiant with the light of heaven and the glory of the Christ he had seen on high. Hence he could add, that even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in the perishing, in whose

case the god of this age blinded the minds of the faithless. He had no veil like Moses: the gospel effectually repudiates it — at least the gospel as he and his fellows preached it. As he believed, so he preached. There was for him no affectation of depth or sublimity. The truth needs no arts to set it off. Nothing else is so lofty, nothing else so deep. It is Christ, the Word, who was God and yet was made flesh, life eternal yet dying for sinners, who descended into the lower parts of the earth, and also ascended up above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. If such glad tidings were veiled, they were veiled in the lost, not by those that preached the truth. In their case, the god of this age blinded the thoughts, or understandings, of the unbelieving. It was no defect in the truth, nor obscurity in the message from God, nor insincerity in the messenger, who gave it out as purely as he received it.

Alas! there is a subtle and energetic adversary of God and man; there are men who have not faith but passions and lusts, which expose them to his influence in blinding them to the truth. And such are all by nature since sin ruined mankind, till grace work repentance to acknowledgment of the truth. But men who are feeble in owning the power of the Spirit are apt to be slow to perceive Satan’s workings; and controversial zeal increases this unscriptural bias. Hence we see that the fathers in general, early and late, Greek and Latin, misapplied this simple and weighty statement of scripture, and denied the devil to be meant here, construing it as God blinding the minds of the unbelievers of this age! (See Cranmer’s Cat. Patr. Gr. v., 373, 374, Oxon. 1844; Iren. Haer. iv. 392; Tert. advers. Marc. 11; Aug. c. adv. Leg. iii., vii. 29.) Hilary, in his zeal

against the Arians, and among the Greeks, Chrysostom, would not allow Satan to be called god of this age, lest it might tell against the deity of Christ; and so OEcumenius and Theodoret, etc., down to Theophylact; as others, like Origen, against other early heretics, Marcionites, Manicheans, etc. It is instructive as a plain proof of patristic shallowness, where they agreed, as they rarely did, on an interpretation. They failed to distinguish between “God” used absolutely, and “god” with a distinct and restricted qualification. And as the Lord, in view of His own rejection unto death, spoke of the devil as the prince of this world (John 12; 14), so the apostle here designates him, with striking propriety, as “god of this age.” During the new age, when the Lord takes the sovereignty of the world (Rev. 11), it will not be so; he will be bound, and thereby kept from his old deceits. Now he takes advantage of all truth to dishonour God and destroy men, his wretched slaves, who, in doing their own will, serve him effectually. Thus are they blinded, that the illumination of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth.36 Here also it is well to notice that “the glorious gospel,” as in the Authorised Version, is not only inadequate, but incorrect. For “the glory” is definitely of Christ exalted to God’s right hand, in virtue of not His person only but redemption, that we who now believe might see Him, and have our place in Him, there. What enlightenment can compare with this? It is part of what the apostle calls “my” and “our gospel.” Christ was, and is, God’s image, alone fully representing Him; but the gospel, as Paul preached it, was not of His descent and life here only, nor of His death and resurrection, but of His glory in heaven also. Hence the appropriateness of the language, with which the reader

may contrast the vague platitudes of the Cat. Patr. v. 374, 375.

There is no defect, then, in “our gospel.” There is not only the firmest foundation of righteousness, but the brightest heavenly glory in the display of that righteousness. In Christ exalted is love with us made perfect. How could it, indeed, go farther? because as He is, so are we in this world. It is the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is God’s image. We are not yet ourselves in possession of the glory as an actual fact, but we have it in Him in whom it shines most fully, and through whom it shines into our hearts. No greater proof, then, of the blinding power of Satan, than that men should be insensible to such glory. But an evil conscience cannot endure the light of God, whatever the love from which the light of that glory springs. For they cannot endure the discovery and judgment of their sins, even though the rejection of His testimony exposes them to everlasting ruin. They believe themselves, or really Satan, the god of this age, rather than the only true God; they are lost. This is what the gospel supposes, though it fully provides for it. But the blessing is inseparable from faith; for God is not saying only, but making the saved vessels on earth to reflect the glory of Christ in heaven.

Such pre-eminently was the apostle. He himself, the stoutest of combatants against the name of Jesus, was struck down in mid-career by the glory of Jesus shining from heaven. He therefore knew, if any soul over did, the gospel of the glory of Christ. Lost, spite of all that law could give or boast of; saved by sovereign grace, spite of all that the strongest enmity could breathe against the Lord and His own, he became the suited witness of a Saviour and Lord on high. Where was self now in his

eyes? and what the worth of religious authority in Israel, any more than of that philosophy which leaves men groping in the dark, whatever the vauntings of its several schools? The worthlessness of all here below he had proved; for him henceforward Christ was all, as indeed He is all, and in all.

“For not ourselves do we preach, but Christ Jesus as Lord,37 and ourselves your bondmen, for Jesus’38 sake, because [it is] the39 God that bid light shine40 out of darkness, who shone into our hearts for the illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God41 in the face of Jesus Christ.” (Vers. 5, 6.) Others might preach themselves; the apostle, Christ Jesus as Lord. He was content to be servant of Christ, and, for that very reason, of the saints, for the Sake of Jesus. This alone is true service; anything else a snare, both to him who serves, and to those who are served, who, in such circumstances, alike serve themselves to His dishonour.

But as Christ Jesus is Lord, and the believer owns and proclaims it according to his measure, so is He the one true and safe motive for the ready service of His saints. Personal interest, or honour, vanishes before His name. And such a servant was the apostle to the Corinthians. What a change, from the prejudiced, law-bound, yet impassioned Jew of Tarsus! How came so complete and sudden a revolution to be brought about in the heart of one naturally most averse to change? It was, it is always, the effect of God’s power in grace. The Creator-God is the Saviour-God, through His Son.

It was as truly light spiritual from God, as that which shone at God’s bidding where darkness had reigned before the earth was prepared for man. “Because God,

that bid light to Shine out of darkness, [is he] who shone in our hearts for [the] illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Thus, for faith does the first man give instant place to the second; and we, who were once darkness, become light in the Lord. The apostle, no doubt, had vividly before him the never to be forgotten circumstances of his own conversion, suggestive of the light at mid-day, above the brightness of the sun shining from heaven. With this he brings in the allusion to Genesis 1:8, so as the better to contrast the light with the previous darkness, and connect all with the power, as well as the word, of God. But he gives both references the precision requisite to the case in hand.

It was a question here, not of an external miracle, but of God's shining "in our hearts" — a thing, after all, far more blessed than even the light of old which answered the bidding of God to dispel the world's deep gloom. If the enemy blinds the thoughts of the unbelieving, grace shines in the believer's heart for the shining forth of the knowledge of His glory in the face, or person, of Christ. So had God operated in the apostle's heart, not merely for his own enjoyment of that heavenly light (though this primarily), but also that it might shine on others, as a testimony to them and for Christ. Grace thus identifies the two things, as Christ gave Himself up "for us," an offering and sacrifice "to God," for an odour of sweet savour. The energy of the Holy Spirit alone can effect so mighty a work in any heart, as it did most abundantly in him for a pattern of those about to believe on Him to life everlasting. So, when taken out from among the people and the Gentiles, he could say that the Lord sent him to the last, with a view to open their eyes, that they might

turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.

There is, therefore, in the gospel, as it reached the apostle, a wondrous double action: not only an inshining of God in his own heart; but this also with a view to giving forth the light of the knowledge of God's glory in Christ's face. If the law was addressed to a people already formed, and in a definite relationship with God, the gospel, especially as Paul knew and preached it, went out to any, to all, to the lost. It was not requirement of man's duty, it was the communication of the knowledge of God's glory, a glory which shone in Christ's face, consequent on the infinite work of redemption, whereby God could justify man in free grace, instead of judging him for his iniquities. If men are inexcusable who reject the gospel, no wonder that the apostle should say, We preach such a Saviour, blending as he does the glory of God with the salvation of sinners. But that glory of God which is thus bound up with salvation is seen not in the heavens, whatever they may declare, but in the face of Jesus Christ. The expanse shows His handy work; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared God Himself, the God whom no one has seen at any time; and so blessedly does He reveal the Father, that, as He said Himself, he that had seen Him had seen the Father.

Such then is the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness in Christ, the revelation of God's glory in His face. This is the treasure which grace gives.

"But we have this treasure in earthenware vessels, that the surpassingness of the power maybe God's, and not of us; in everything being afflicted, yet not straitened,

sorely yet not utterly perplexed, persecuted yet not forsaken, cast down yet not destroyed, always bearing about in the42 body the dying [or, putting to death] of Jesus.43 that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.44 For we that live are ever being delivered up unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus45 may be manifested in our mortal flesh." (Vers. 7-11)

Thus does the apostle meet the natural thought of men which the carnal mind among the Corinthians had taken up against himself, to their loss and his grief. In an apostle they had looked for a grand style of speech, for lofty speculation and subtle argument, as well as a dignified and attractive presence, backed up by such a display of power as would overawe all the world. They could not understand therefore that one who was not a whit behind the chiefest apostles should be with them in weakness and fear and much trembling; and that on principle he should forego every advantage of intellectual ability and acquired learning, of all that which is a matter of boast to the flesh; nay more, that he should glory in infirmities, and treat as his foolishness all reference to his devoted service and mighty deeds, signs and wonders, with the vast and deep effects of his preaching. He was indeed the most remarkable of sufferers no less than of labourers; but he insists that, when he was weak, then was he strong. What he gloried in was the Lord, and His strength made perfect in weakness. Doubtless, as the apostle surpassed all others in depth of heart and all — endurance for Christ and the church and the gospel, so in this also, the most abiding consciousness of weakness and insufficiency keeping him in dependence on the Lord.

Here he lays down the general principle. “We have this treasure in earthenware vessels,” and this “that the surpassingness of the power may be God’s, and not of us.” The deposit was none the less precious because laid up in the coarsest ware. The very object is to make evident, by the contrast of man, weak and fragile and suffering, that the power is God’s. On the one hand a revelation of grace and truth which goes down into all depths of evil, and extricates so completely as to put those who were once slaves of Satan into the closest living association by the Spirit with the Christ glorified in heaven; on the other, the vessels of this delivering power exposed not to an occasional assault of the enemy, but kept up by God in the face of constant pressure and excessive trial and extreme weakness, yet with blessing flowing out on every side: hard pressed, but not straitened; at a loss, but not absolutely so; pursued but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

What was it then that the Spirit set before those who thus hold on their way? What gave patience in a path so strange to flesh and blood? “Always bearing about in the body the putting to death of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.” Such was the habitual course of the apostle himself. He went about everywhere as one that realised Christ’s portion in the world, at all times applying death to the body, keeping it down as dead. It is the power of the cross applied to that which otherwise craves present case and enjoyment, in order that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body.” For the believer lives of the very same life as the Saviour, in contrast with his old Adam life shared by all the race; and it is the activity of the natural life which

hinders the working and manifestation of the life of Jesus. Hence the importance of ever applying by faith the putting to death (νέκρωσιν) of Jesus, in its moral power, to the body, disallowing its energy by holding it for dead, that the life of Jesus also may be shown out.

And as this is the constant bent of those who are true to the cross practically, so God helps such souls in fact by continuous exposure to sorrow and suffering, difficulty, to danger, and death itself for Jesus' sake, in order that the blessed end of manifesting the life of Jesus may be the more effectuated. "For we that live are ever being delivered up unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh." A far weightier testimony, in such unwearied and unceasing trial, to God's power with His servant, than enduring a martyr's death through some sudden outburst of the world's hatred, however blessed and honourable such a death undoubtedly is.

Verse 12 is the conclusion of this part of the subject, the service of Christ in divine love and self-abnegation which works death to the servant as surely as life to the saints he serves. This was true of the Master in the fullest way; it is verified in those who follow Him in the labour of love, just so far as they are true to Him.

"So that46 death worketh in us, but life in you. But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, wherefore [also]47 I spoke: we also believe, wherefore also we speak; knowing that he that raised up the Lord48 Jesus shall raise up us also with49 Jesus, and shall present [us] with you. For all things [are] for your sakes, that the grace having multiplied through the greater number might make the

thanksgiving abound unto the glory of God." (Vers. 12-15.)

It is a total misapprehension of the opening words to suppose that the least approach to a withering rebuke lies hid here, as in 1 Corinthians 4:8-14. Calvin and others have thought so, but there is no real ground to doubt that the apostle very simply states the present effect of serving Christ when His mind and grace govern in such a world and state as this. It is death to kiln who in the work shares the affections and thoughts of Christ. Continual exposure to trial, habitual experience of grief, ridicule, detraction, opposition, enmity on the one hand; on the other, hopes, fears and disappointments; a never ceasing succession of all that can draw out, and withal distress, the spirit cannot fail to do their work in him who thus serves Christ and the saints for His sake. But in the face of all, in spite of evil, and in virtue of grace, the saints are helped, strengthened, cleared, comforted, and blessed. "Death worketh in us, and life in you." The apostle habitually toiling and suffering was thoroughly content, and rejoiced in the gain of others: if he was wearing away bodily, those ministered to were being led on in what is imperishable. The service of Christ truly carried out costs all here below, but the blessing is commensurate even now; and what will be the result in glory? Not only was life in Christ given to those that believed, but it was fed, exercised, and developed by ministrations of truth, of which grace was the spring and character and power, in presence of the deepest shame and pain and all calculated to dishearten, yet ever rising above the obstacles and persevering, no matter what the weakness, not only in view of death, but death working already.

But in Christ is the power of resurrection, now to faith, by-and-by in fact, even as the Spirit of Christ gave the Psalmist of old to sing in days of sorrow, “But having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, I believed, wherefore I spoke; we also believe, wherefore also we speak.” No trial or suffering, not death itself in view, can stop the believer’s mouth: he confides in God, and can speak out and well of Him.

New Testament accomplishment also exceeds Old Testament promise, for we can read all in the light of Christ dead and risen. Such is our conscious knowledge, before we too are raised and glorified. And thus we are to be on a common principle with Jesus, in contrast with the wicked who refuse to believe on Him, and are only raised by divine power for judgment. It is not so with the righteous or saints, who live of His life, and have the Spirit of God dwelling in them since redemption. They look to be changed at His coming, to enjoy His glory and love in perfection of their state, as now they do in His person. The resurrection of those who fall asleep meanwhile is from among the dead as His was. His resurrection declares that there is no judgment for the believer, as surely as it proclaims its certainty for the world, as the apostle teaches in Romans 4:25, and Acts 17:31. But it is a mistake to use Ephesians 2:6, or Colossians 2, 3:1, to illustrate the critical reading σύν “with” against the more common διά “by” or “through.” For these epistles, pre-eminently treating of our association with Christ, insist that we are already dead and risen with Christ, whilst our text speaks solely of the future. Perhaps the nearest to it is 1 Thessalonians 5:10, where it is taught that our Lord Jesus Christ died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together

with Mm. It is in the one living the life of glory, as in the other raising us in order to it.

And it is added that He “will present us with you.” All efforts of Meyer and others now, as of some in former times, to lower the meaning to extrication from dangers or difficulties, are vain. Here it is the presentation of all together in glory, whether the servants or those served in grace, all being raised on a common principle with their Master who is their life after dying for them. What are present trials in comparison of such a prospect! How blessed that as nothing shall be able to separate the saints from the love of God which is in Christ, so God will have together in glory those who on earth were exposed to all kinds of divisive and destructive influence!

“For all things [are] for your sakes, that the grace having multiplied through the greater number might make the thanksgiving abound unto the glory of God.” (Ver. 15.) What an answer in the apostle to the affections of Christ! And certainly it was not in word or feeling only, but in deeds and sufferings which proved its reality and depth. It was endurance with joyfulness in a love like its source for the saints of God. And he looked for fruit accordingly, that if it fell to such as himself to suffer in the service of the many, the grace which so wrought might be the more diffused and cause thanksgiving to go up from all that reaped the blessing to the glory of God.

There are thus, along with the consciousness of utter weakness and exposure, spiritual forces of the most powerful kind, which sustain in the face of all trial and suffering the faith of what God has already wrought in

Christ risen; the hope of what He will do for us who believe on Him; and the love which bears all for the blessing of those so precious to both the Father and the Son.

“Wherefore we fail not; but even if our outer man is consuming, yet the inner is being renewed day by day. For the momentary lightness of our affliction worketh out for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory: while we have the eye not on the things that are seen, but on those not seen, for the things seen [are] temporary, but those not seen, eternal.” (Vers. 16-18.)

On such divine ground the apostle repudiates all thoughts of succumbing, and declares for moving on undauntedly. Enjoyment, ease, honour, are out of the question as a present thing; nay, pain, tribulation, detraction, contempt, opposition, all that can wear away the outer man are sure as the path of Christ is trodden. But in all these things is the life of the Spirit. Grace turns to our account by Christ, and this, even now, the things which seem most contrary to man’s life in this world. Be it that it perishes, yet the inner man is renewed day by day. (Ver. 16.) It is not that the saint becomes more meet for partaking of the inheritance of the saints in light, for this rests on Christ and His redemption; but there is growth spiritually, a new nature and sure judgment of things around us, there is less value for what once attracted, and a more undivided deepening joy in the Lord and His objects here as well as in heavenly things. The babe becomes not a young man only, but a father. (1 John 2) Christ is more unwaveringly the attraction and the standard of thought, feeling, conduct, everything; while flesh and world not only sink, but are judged unsparingly, as one passes

through all that would otherwise disappoint and torture, now regarded with calm and even thanksgiving.

This is so true that the apostle does not hesitate to designate so withering and pitiless a storm of trial, ever repeating itself in fresh blows and continual grief, as “the momentary lightness of our affliction.” Yet who ever beheld, yea conceived, such suffering, save in the One with whom none can compare? And His grace it is that so works, and strengthens thus to reckon. Lightness of affliction! in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in death often. But why recite what no reader of feeling can have forgotten? Momentary! in him who scarce knew cessation of unexampled perils, inflictions, and labours. Yet was he full of good cheer. “For the momentary lightness of our affliction worketh out for us in surpassing measure an eternal weight of glory.” (Ver. 17.) To this he looked onward, reaping withal no small return of blessing even now, and thus binding together what was spiritual along the way with the end in the presence of the Lord by-and-by, in words which labour for adequate expression of the truth.

We must not lay unfounded stress on the “while” which introduces the last verse in our tongue. It is not here the expression of time emphatically, as if the blessing were only going on during the soul’s regard of the things set before our faith, however important it may be that our regard should go on unbrokenly. The apostle says no more than that such is the due object for our contemplation, our heed paid not to the things that are seen, but to those that are not seen; with the explanation or reason assigned, “for the things that are seen [are] temporary, but those that are not seen [are] eternal.” (Ver. 18.) Who does not own, save the basest of

sceptics, that deliverance from the present and fleeting is true power? Who feels as he ought the simplicity with which Christ, as now revealed to us, and revealing the unseen and eternal things, makes good this mighty work in those who believe? How ought not the Christian to appreciate the gospel of His glory?

1 Χ.

Ἰ., B M P, etc.

Ἰ Χ., as in Text. Rec., A D B G K L, the mass of cursives, and most ancient versions, etc.

2 Text. Rec. on very slight authority omits

τοῦ.

3 Verse 6 is in a varied order in the MSS and edd. Text. Rec. puts καὶ ἡ ἐλπὶς β. ὑπ. ὑμ. at the end, and τῆς ἐν κ. τ. λ. after σωτηρίας, which seems an unauthorised conjecture. Tisch. follows A C M, etc., in reading εἴτε δὲ θλ., ὑπὲρ τῆς ὑπῶν π. κ. σ.· εἴτε π., ὑπὲρτ. ἡμ. π. (omitting καὶ σ.)

τῆσ ἐνεργ. I follow B D F K L, etc., except that B. omits the first καὶ σωτηρίας.

4 περί A C D E F G P many cursives, etc.,

ὑπέρ, Text. Rec. with B and most uncials and cursives.

5 ἡμῖν Text. Rec. with most MSS, but the oldest and best authorities do not read “to us.”

6 ῥύσεται B C P, etc., with some of the best versions,

ῥύεται, Text. Rec. and most others, save A D, etc., which omit either.

7 The Elz. ed. of 1633 without sense inserts

τὸ before

εὐχ. The MSS and even edd. strangely interchange and

ὑμῶν.

8 ἁπλότητι is the reading of Text. Rec. with the mass,

ἁγιότητι of the oldest.

9 Text. Rec. with most omits

ἡμῶν.

10 I see no reason to doubt that not “answer” but “sentence,” as Hesychius says, is the true meaning.

11 χαράν the reading of B L etc., is not entitled to shake the common χάριν. There is more question between the received ἔξητε or σχῆτε, which last is supported by B C etc.

12 For the vulgar

βουλευόμενος, the best MSS, etc., give

βουλόμένος.

13 ἐγένετο Text. Rec. with later witnesses, but the earlier show ἔστιν.

14 καὶ ἐν αὐτῳ Text. Rec. with some later authorities, but διὸ καὶ δἰ αὐτοῦ A B C F, etc.

15 καὶ ἐν αὐτῳ Text. Rec. with some later authorities, but διὸ καὶ δἰ αὐτοῦ A B C F, etc.

16 So A D B F G K L O P, most cursives, and Text. Rec. C, etc., ὑμᾶς σὺν ἡμῖν, B and another the absurdity of ὑμᾶς σὺν ὑμῖν.

17 So corr. B Ccorr. D E L O, etc., Text. Rec.; F G, etc., καὶ ὁ, but p.m. A Cp.m. K P, etc., omit the article.

18 The true order is

πάλιν ἐν λύπῃ πρὸς ὑμᾶς ἐλθεῖν with the best and most MSS.

19 There is no

ὑμῖν ιν p.m. A, B, Cp.m. O, P, etc.

20 ἐκ twice (A B C, etc.), with the genitive.

21 Ibid.

22 (not

εἰ as A K L P, etc., which follows)

μή B C D E F G etc. The Auth. V. here rejects Er. Compl. St. Be. for the reading of Colinaeus and the Vulg.

23 The second

συστατικῶν added in Text. Rec. following most MSS is rejected by the best witnesses.

24, half a dozen cursives, and versions too, exhibit the strange blunder of ὑμῶν for ἡμ. "in your hearts."

25 καρδίαις "hearts" in apposition with pl., "tablets," is read by high authority (AB C D E G L P, five and twenty cursives, etc.); the common reading καρδίας "of the heart," by F K, most cursives, and almost all ancient versions; etc.

26 γράμματι (sing.) B D F G, Pesch., Arm.;

γράμμασιν (plur.) in much the more numerous copies, and versions, and all the fathers.

27 τῇ δ. A C Dp.m. F G, Syrr., etc.; but

ἡ δ. most MSS., versions, etc.

28 οὐ the best MSS. and versions and Fathers;

οὐδέ Text. Rec. following many cursives. etc.

29 Or, It not being unveiled (that is, revealed) that (or, because) in Christ it is done away.

30 I am aware that the late Dean Alford affirms in his Greek Testament (ii. 645, 5th ed., 1865) that “a mistake has been made with regard to the history in Exodus 34:33-35 which has considerably obscured the understanding of the verse [13]. It is commonly assumed that Moses spoke to the Israelites, having the veil on his face; and this is implied in our version -’Till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.’ But the LXX (and Heb.) gave a different account: καὶ ἐκειδῃ κατέπαυσεν λαλῶν πρὼς αὐτούς, ἐπέθηκεν ἐπὶ τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ κάλυμμα. He spoke to them without the veil, with his face shining and glorified; — when he had done speaking, he placed the veil on his face: and that not because they were afraid to look on him, but as here, that they might not look on the end, or the fading of that transitory glory,” etc. But the mistake is in Dean A. following the Septuagint and at most the letter of the Heb. in verse 33, so as to contradict or neutralise the plain force of the context, and especially verse 35. The meaning ought never to have been questioned, that, while Moses talked to the people without, he covered This face, but removed the veil when he went in to speak with Jehovah. Verse 30 is clear that, because his face shone, the people were afraid to come nigh, and he therefore put on the veil which he took off when he went in before Jehovah till he came out. The Vulgate, like the Sept., sacrifices the sense to the letter; and the two have misled many.

31 Calvin in his comment on this verse indulges in a whimsical conceit, which is the more singular as it is meant for correcting other Greek and Latin writers who were in this nearer the truth than himself. “Locus hic male hactenus versus fuit: putarunt enim tam Graeci quam Romani subaudiendum nomen Israelis, quum de Mose loquatur Paulus. Dixerat velamen esse impositum Iudaeorum cordibus, dum legitur Moses. Continuo addit, Simulatque conversus fuerit ad Dominum, velamen ablatum iri. Quis non videt de Mose hoc dici, hoc est, de Lege?” (I. Calv. Nov. Opera Omnia, vii. 233, Amst. 1667.) It is quite true that the Jews in shutting out Christ lost the truth of scripture, its aim and scope; but the heart of Israel is the true subject, and not Moses as representing the law.

32 It is not denied that the Spirit is Lord, which seems to me conveyed in verse 18. Still this, if put in the form of a proposition. would be expressed by τὸ πνεῦμα κύριός ἐστιν, and not in the reciprocal form which would exclude the Father and the Son from the same title. The fathers, therefore, who regarded this clause as an assertion of the Holy Ghost’s divinity, were as wrong grammatically as exegetically. Neither words nor context can admit of this interpretation. The late Dr. Hodge amazes one, on the other hand by saying that Christ is the Holy Spirit, in the same sense as the Lord says, “I and the Father are one.” There is not the least reason that the Spirit should mean the same thing in both clauses, especially as the phrase differs (“Spirit of the Lord”), which we have already traced in the burning, yet weighty, words of the apostle.

33 ἐκεῖ in Text. Rec. is supported by many MSS., but not A B C D, etc.

34 κατοπτριζόμενοι means neither “reflecting,” nor “seeing in a mirror.” though this last be etymologically the source, but “beholding,” without reference to the mirror, as in so many words which thus cast their primitive shell.

35 The more ancient MSS. read (some

ἐνκ.) ἐγκακοῦμεν, the great mass (some old)

ἐκκ., and the critics, as well as lexicographers. fancy a difference of reading and word, where there seems but variety in spelling. Thus Dean Alford takes ἐνκ. as not “shrinking back,” quailing, or acting cowardly; while he assigns to ἐκκ. the sense of “fainting.” But he is not consistent, for, though he reads ἐγκ. in Luke 18:1, he rightly treats it as “fainting.” so also in Galatians 6:9, Ephesians 3:18, 2 Thessalonians 3:14. In Polyb. iv. 19, 10 it is properly the same (not ἐξ., but ἐνεκάκησαν), the Lacedemonians failed to send, not that they behaved badly, etc. They were faint-hearted about it. Liddell and Scott, as well as Rost and Palm, should revise the words, or rather word. I see Bishop Ellicott had been before me in coming to a judgment which I had formed independently.

36 αὐτοῖς. “unto them,” is not an omission as Dr. Bloomfield says, but rather an addition of the more recent copies followed by the Text. Rec., against the oldest MSS, and versions and fathers.

37 The MSS. fluctuate between

Χ.

Ἰ. Κ., supported by the Vatican, some few uncials, and most cursives, versions, etc.; Ἰ. Χ. Κ. as the Sinaitic,

Alex., Rescript of Paris, and some other good authorities; K .

Ἰ. Χ. with some few witnesses; and finally

Ἰ. Χ. or

Χ.

Ἰ. omitting K.

38 The weight of authority is in favour of

διὰ

Ἰησοῦν, but the Sinaitic and Paris Rescript, etc., read διὰ

Ἰησοῦ, as some others have

Χριστόν or

Χριστοῦ.

39 The Vatican, etc., omit

ὁ before

θ.

40 For

λάμφαι, as in Text. Rec. following most, the oldest read λάμψει (= God that said, Out of darkness light shall shine).

41 Some MSS. (D F G, etc.) omit

ὅς, as others beside (C D, etc.) for

τοῦ θ. have

αὐτοῦ. Most give

Ἰ. Χ., others

Χ.

Ἰ., A B, etc.. simply

X.

42 Many authorities give “our.”

43 Some three uncials, etc. add

χριστοῦ “Christ’ as Text. Rec. with two uncials and most cursives prefix κυρίου “the Lord,” but the best support the text followed here.

44 etc., read

σώμασιν “bodies.”

45 gives

χριστοῦ “Christ” instead of “Jesus;” others give both.

46 μέν is not read by the best authorities.

47 καί “also” F G, etc.

48 B, etc. omit

κύριον.

49 σὺν

Ἰ. p.m. B C D E F G P, a few uncials with most cursives, etc.

2 Corinthians 5-8

2 Corinthians 5

This leads the apostle to open out the power of life we have in Christ, and its results. “For we know that if our earthly tabernacle-house be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, everlasting in the heavens. For also in this we groan, longing to clothe ourselves with our dwelling which is from heaven, if indeed50 also when clothed51 we shall not be found naked.” (Vers. 1-8.)

What calm and confident knowledge the apostle here predicates of Christians as such! And what a contrast with the dark uncertainty of unbelief, or with its impious audacity! The eternal things are none the less sure in hope because they are not seen. For we know that, if death destroy the earthly tent we live in, we have a building of God. The body in its present state he compares to a tabernacle to be taken down, in its future to a building from God as the source, and to a house not made with hands, and hence everlasting in the heavens, its suited and purposed sphere for ever. As we already heard, God who raised up the Lord Jesus shall also raise up by Him those also who sleep, and then present us all together faultless before the throne of His glory: here details are entered into with clearness and discrimination. It is one of the few passages which treat of the intermediate state, as well as of the resurrection or change of the body for glory, and therefore of the deepest interest to the faithful personally and relatively. And in a few brief and plain words adequate light is given, without the smallest indulgence of irreverent

curiosity, for all that concerns the family of God after death as well as the change at Christ's coming. One cannot conceive a communication more worthy of God, or more characteristic of His word generally, while it bears the deep impress of His blessed servant who was inspired to give it.

Of course theology is here little more than a Babel of discordant tongues; and even the more pious and learned seem unable to answer with precision what is meant by the building we have of God. Some will have it that this house not made with hands is heaven itself, but how then could it be said to be "in the heavens?" How could we be in this case said to be clothed with our house or "dwelling which is from heaven?" The house and heaven itself are carefully distinguished. Others again, with less error but with an imperfect view of the passage as a whole, think only of the resurrection body. But it does not follow that the passage throws no light on the state of the soul between death and the resurrection, or that it treats solely of what is to happen after Christ's second coming.

The lowest and most mischievous of these interpretations is that of Olshausen and others who admire petty philosophising,52 and contend that the house entered at death is an ethereal corporeity adapted to the heavenly condition of the soul, either intermediate between death and the resurrection, or (as bolder spirits say) to the exclusion of the body which is not to be resuscitated and changed. The intermediate and glorified vehicle of the soul is directly at issue with the plain and decisive language of this very passage. The house is described not only as in the heavens, but as "everlasting." Scripture shuts out therefore all notion of

a temporary body, for the soul in heaven before the resurrection of the body we now have. And a man must be a sceptical Sadducee who denies that He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by (or, by reason of) His Spirit that dwelleth in us. (Rom. 8:11) There is intermediate blessedness for the believer apart from his body with Christ on high; but the resurrection from the dead awaits His coming.

In opposition to the true bearing it is argued:

1. That heaven is often in scripture compared to a house in which there are many mansions (John 14:2); or to a city in which there are many houses (Heb. 11:10, 14; Heb. 13:14; Rev. 21:10); or more generally to everlasting habitations. (Luke 16:9.) But we have already seen that, whatever be the figures used of the portion of the glorified saints in other scriptures, the house in this passage cannot mean heaven, because it is said here to be from heaven and in the heavens.

2. Whatever the reasoning to show that, as the soul now dwells in the body, heaven will be its house after death, it is inconsistent with the thoughts and language of the context.

3. Again, the effort to press that the discipline given here of the house agrees with that of heaven elsewhere is vain, if it were only because the state on which the soul enters after death is so far from “everlasting,” that the change we await is at Christ’s coming. The body is not in heaven now, nor is it said to be brought down to us from heaven; but Christ is there and is coming thence when we shall have in power and actuality what we have now in faith.

4. And this is the true force of

ἔχομεν, not in the least as conveying that the house is one on which we enter immediately after death, but its certainty to faith. That it is synchronous with death is mere assumption, and would involve the idea, not of heaven, but of a new vehicle for the soul which we have already seen to be wholly inconsistent with this passage and all truth. Hence it is not said that when our tent-house, or the body is dissolved, but if it should be. This leaves it equally open when, as now, the building from God is entered, and only declares the certainty that such a house of permanence we have. The present in Greek, as in other languages and our own, is frequently used (when required) to express, not merely actual time, but a truth apart from time in its abstract character or certainty. This must be, from what we have observed, its force here. To give it the meaning of actual fact now going on introduces nothing but confusion and error. What the apostle expresses is certainty of possession. He speaks of incomparably better habitations, supposing the dissolution of the present; but the time and way of entering on it had to be learnt from other scriptures. He does speak of being absent from the body and present with the Lord a little farther on, but neither of being in a new body while absent from the body, nor of heaven being like a body meanwhile, which seems, if possible, more absurd, as both thoughts are alike baseless. Matthew 22:32 speaks only of the resurrection. Luke 20 38 adds that the souls of the deceased live to God, though away from men, before they rise. Nor is there any doubt, if we believe Luke 16; 22; 2 Corinthians 5; and Philippians 1, that it is far better with the departed saints, and that they are in paradise, the brightest part of heaven, with Christ. (Cf. Heb. 12:23.)

If death come, the resurrection body, already fully described in 1 Corinthians 15, is sure, in all its contrast with tent or any other building of time or of this creation, crumbling to rain as it is. And the blessedness of what we thus have in hope is such that only the more do “we groan in this, longing to have put on our house which is from heaven, if indeed also when clothed we shall not be found naked.” (Vers. 2, 3.) That is, the brightness of the life he now had in Christ was so hindered by the body as it is that he could but groan in his ardent desires after the glorified condition with which Christ will invest him. It is the groaning not of a disappointed sinner nor of an undelivered saint, but of those who, assured of life and victory in Christ, feel the wretched contrast of the present with the glory in prospect. Only he adds the cautious proviso, that is, supposing we are really Christ’s. The anxiety expressed more plainly at the close of 1 Corinthians 9 is not quite gone from the beginning of 2 Corinthians 5.

Hence one must reject every attempt to tamper with the conditional rendering of verse 3. The ordinary text εἴ γε (or εἴγε) has excellent support, not only in the vast majority of the manuscripts, but in the antiquity and goodness of some, as the Sinaitic, Rescript of Paris, and others; and this is adhered to by most critics. But Lachmann and Tregelles prefer εἴπερ with the Vatican, Cambridge, and a few other authorities. But the alleged distinction (of Hermann’s notes on Viger) is unfounded in the New Testament, as elsewhere also. It has been even remarked by one of remarkable penetration that the converse is true, and that the true difference is: εἴπερ puts the case that a thing is;

εἴγε the possibility that it is not.

Εἴγε, says J. B. Lightfoot, leaves a loophole for doubt; εἴπερ is, if anything, more directly affirmative than εἴ γε. Assuredly this seems rather confirmed by their distinctive origin, for as per is intensive, ye is restrictive. But the usage appears to indicate that the context must be taken into consideration in order to decide the true bearing. So Meyer and Ellicott confess that it is the sentence, and not the particle, which determines the rectitude of the assumption. It is utterly false that, either in or out of the New Testament, εἴγε as a matter of course means "since" any more than εἴπερ always expresses doubt.

The various reading

ἐκδυσάμενοι, "unclothed," in the Clermont, Augian, and Boernerian manuscripts, etc., accepted by many fathers and even by a few critics, is a mere effort to get rid of difficulty. The sense may be plainer, but it is worthless. The true reading ἐνδυσάμενοι is most pertinent and forcible, unless indeed we translate εἴγε "since," which reduces the clause to a platitude: "since when clothed we shall not be found naked," or "seeing that we shall verily be found clothed, not naked," which is a poor tautology unworthy of scripture, and as far from Pauline as possible. Translate it, "if at least, even when clothed, we shall be found not naked," and the propriety is as great as its strength. For the solemn fact is, that there is a resurrection of unjust no less than just. All therefore are to be clothed. An hour is coming when all that are in the tombs shall hear the voice of the Son, and shall go forth, those that have practised good to a resurrection of life, and those that have done evil to a resurrection of judgment. The resurrection of the body for all will be the clothing of all, though not of all at the same time nor

with like result, but with the most marked contrasts and unchanging issues. For when the wicked are raised, they may and shall be clothed indeed, but shall be found naked. They have not the wedding robe, they have no righteousness before God; they rejected, despised, or did without Christ; they have nothing but sins, and cannot escape everlasting judgment. Whilst in the body here, they might pass muster; when clothed with the resurrection body (for all must rise), those who here lived and died without Christ will be found naked. The apostle therefore solemnly warns, in this passage of the richest comfort for the true, that some might prove false. The everlasting and heavenly glory will be for us at the resurrection, if at least when clothed we shall be found not naked: a seeming paradox, but not more startling than true. Blessed they, and they only, who now have and have put on Christ.

The words “clothed” or “unclothed” refer to the being in or out of the body; “naked” to being destitute of Christ. This distinction was overlooked by Calvin, as it has been by others since. They conceive that the idea was to restrict the clothing to the righteous; and hence that the wicked are, stripped of their bodies, to appear naked before God; whereas believers, clothed with Christ’s righteousness, are to be invested with a glorious nature of immortality. Had it been observed that “not naked” alone refers to the putting on Christ now with its everlasting consequences, the confusion would have been avoided. The apostle speaks of the common portion we have in Christ (in presence of death, as by-and-by of the judgment-seat), of the triumph assured in His life who died but is risen and alive again for evermore; but

this in no way hinders a passing and grave caution to such as might boast of gifts without grace or conscience.

Other speculations, such as of Grotius, are hardly worth a notice; and that of Meyer followed by Alford (“if, as is certain, we in fact shall be found clothed, not naked”) demands no more words, having been disposed of already. Nor need we discuss at greater length Hodge’s attempt from the same rendering to sustain his notion that the apostle here refers not to the risen body but to a mansion in heaven. The simple but profound truth of God delivers from every mist of error.

Having given so solemn a word of warning for conscience, the apostle returns to the groaning and the longing spoken of in verse 2 in order to clear the truth more fully.

“For also we that are in the53 tabernacle groan, being burdened, because54 we desire not to be unclothed but clothed upon, that what is mortal should be swallowed up of life. Now he that wrought55 us for this very thing [is] God, that gave56 us the earnest of the Spirit.” (Vers. 4, 5.)

The true knowledge of the living possession of Christ, far from neutralising one’s sense of the groaning creation, deeply increases it. Peace and joy in believing there is most really and to the full; but it is in Him who suffered here and is glorified above the sorrow and death that He tasted and the sins which He bore in His own body on the tree. Our body is the tabernacle in which we are, a part itself of the creation made subject to vanity; and we who are in it groan under the oppressive sense of its utter ruin, not because we are not delivered in Christ, but the rather because we are

and feel deeply therefore what is under the bondage of corruption. We know that deliverance is at hand, not merely for our body but for all that is now travailing in pain, and that Christ will have the glory, as all creation will have the joy in that day.

Difficulties have been made about the phrase, which opens the next clause; but it seems rather needlessly, for ἐφ᾽ ᾧ, the true reading, is not uncommon in our apostle, whose use of it quite falls in with its regular application in all correct Greek to express the condition, or occasion, under which a thing or person is characterised, and may be rendered “for,” “seeing,” “in that,” or “because” qualifying what precedes. Compare Romans 5:12, Philippians 3:12, Philippians 4:10, with the clause before us, in all of which may be found a like sense substantially, though modified by a different context. “Wherefore,” or “in which,” seems as feeble as misleading. The fact is that it is but a special case of its general sense as the ground, condition, or occasion of anything — the term on which a thing is based.

Here the apostle qualifies our burdened groaning in the tabernacle, as no selfish desire to escape trial, however aggravated. Yet no man experienced this so deeply, variously, or unremittingly as himself; none therefore was so exposed to wish that such a path should be closed by departure to be with the Lord. But this he deprecates for the saints as well as himself, not for that we wish to be unclothed but clothed upon, that what is mortal should be swallowed up by life. He is contrasting the power of life in Christ at His coming with going to Him in the separate state. No doubt this is better, far better, for us than abiding here in sorrow and suffering. But the apostle thought of Christ’s glory in this

scripture, as of the need of souls in Philippians 1. Hence in the latter he recognised the value of his staying for their help, and that so it would be. Here he expresses the exceeding blessedness of bringing the body under the power of that life which he already knew for his inner man in Christ. Nothing less than this therefore could satisfy him.

To be “unclothed” is to be rid of the body by death when the believer goes to be with Christ. But this is expressly what he did not wish, however blessed in itself, for the very reason that the blessing was only for himself in His presence. What he desired was fresh glory to Christ when He comes; for then and only then is the believer “clothed upon.” He resumes the body then, no longer like the first Adam, but like the Last, once having borne the image of the earthy, thenceforward bearing that of the Heavenly. We will have put on our house which is from heaven, according to our longing desire. For it is not even necessary to be “unclothed,” that is, to put off the body by dying. All turns on the coming of Christ who is our life in all its fulness. If He tarry and call us meanwhile to be with Him, we shall of course be “unclothed;” but if He come while we wait for Him here, we shall be “clothed” upon without the putting off of our tabernacle. For from the heavens we await Him as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory according to the power which He has even to subdue all things to Himself. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last tramp; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. Hence it is said here “that what is mortal shall be

swallowed up by life," not merely raised up out of death, but the mortal in us yielding to the superior and all-transforming power of the life in Christ, the body no longer as it was in Adam, but as in the Second man coming again from heaven.

The New Testament apostle goes considerably and characteristically beyond the Old Testament prophet, though both statements be true and one writer be inspired as really as the other. Yet the truth is not quite the same; for Isaiah speaks of Jehovah swallowing up "death" in victory [or, for ever], and this will be verified ex abundanti at Christ's coming, when there will be not only the raising of the dead in Christ but the arrest of mortality in the living saints, or, as it is here figuratively designated, the swallowing up of what is mortal by life. Even such a resurrection of the faithful would be a manifest triumph of gracious power over utter ruin: how much more that mortality should never work out into death, but be absorbed by the all conquering power of life in Christ!

Nor does the apostle allow the smallest uncertainty in the hope before the believer; nay, he affirms an actual and divine pledge which cannot fail. "Now He that wrought us for this very thing [is] God that gave us the earnest of the Spirit." (Ver. 5.) How blessed to have come under the operation of His grace, even while here we groan in the tabernacle! But so it is. We have life in Christ, yea, everlasting life, and everlasting redemption. God, who cannot fail, does not begin to leave His work an unfinished thing. He that wrought us for this very thing, the swallowing up of the mortal by the life which triumphs for ever, the self-same portion as Christ, is God, as indeed He only would have thought of it or could

have so wrought; nor this only, for He gave us the earnest of the Spirit that we might taste the joy of coming glory, having its pledge even in our utter weakness. It is not the “anointing” us here as elsewhere, which has a larger force, not yet the “sealing” us, but that aspect of the Spirit given to us which is in relation to Christ’s coming again, and our entering on the inheritance with Him. It is “the earnest of the Spirit” given in our hearts, that we might not rest here, vainly contenting ourselves with what is present, or groaning without a divine taste of that which we shall share with Christ, as even hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that was given to us.

It is instructive to notice how the coming of the Lord is not only urged continually in the scriptures as the constant and proximate expectation of the saints, but underlies all and accounts for much even where not a word is said about it directly or openly as here. It is the failure of the divines, and even of commentators, in perceiving this which has exposed them to such poverty (if not perversity) of interpretation in speaking of this momentous passage, which ought not to present a difficulty to a single believer, but to be the cheer of every christian heart, as evidently intended of God. Had the coming of the Lord been a practical truth living in the souls of good men like Dr. John Guyse and the mass of even orthodox and godly Protestants, could they have applied these words to that which is immediately after their death, merely allowing that, as the happiness of the soul in heaven will be followed and completed by the resurrection of the body, the apostle might also have that in his ultimate view? No, it is not true, (whatever

the happiness of the separate state with Christ, of which we shall hear anon,) that he is here treating of “the transcendent undefiled felicities of an immortal life, which the soul shall enter upon as soon as ever it is separated from the body,” but of the resurrection or change when Christ comes. Of this theology stops short; and hardly any other cause has produced wider or deeper effects on saints in Christendom than such habitual and systematic forgetfulness of our proper hope. On the other hand, nothing has contributed more than its recovery to awaken the faithful by self-judgment to their past low estate and their true posture of waiting for the Lord, yea, going out to meet Him, according to His own parabolic prediction.

Such then is the power of life in Christ which we possess now. We look for glory even for the body if it were dissolved, for mortality to vanish before it if Christ came, without any need of death, which was already vanquished. God has wrought us for this very thing, the same glory as Christ, and meanwhile has given us the earnest of the Spirit.

“Therefore being always confident, and knowing that, while present in the body, we are absent from the Lord (for we walk by faith, not by appearance [or, sight]), we are confident and well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore also we are zealous that, whether present or absent, we may be agreeable to him.” (Vers. 6-9.)

The good courage of the Christian is unbroken by death, though he looks not for death as a man does. His confidence is founded on Christ, he knows God for him, and he has the Spirit as earnest of all he hopes for. All

things are sure, and among them life or death: but Christ governs all, and we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. Neither death nor life nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. We are courageous then at all times, whatever the way of God with us meanwhile, and know that, while at home in the body, we are abroad from the Lord. This is not our rest, it is polluted. He is not here but risen and in glory, and our hearts are with Him where He is, and we look for Him to be like Him as well as with Him. But this is not all. We know that, while sojourning in the body as now, we are away from the Lord. This is neither the ground of our confidence, as Calvin most strangely misconceived,57 nor is it an exception to it as Romanists and Rationalists have thought. It accompanies our good cheer and falls in with it as a part of our christian knowledge, and it accounts for our readiness of mind to quit the body when summoned, and to go home with the Lord. The connection of εἴδοτες is both grammatically and logically with εὐδοκοῦμεν, though afterwards resumed in another shape.

The wisdom of God is apparent in this. For here we have one of the few scriptures which give us the light of God on the intermediate state of the Christian: and it is of great moment that the immense blessedness of the final victory should not cloud that state of bliss which intervenes.

There is on the one hand no excuse for the unbelief which makes everything of going to be with Christ after death and stops short of the only adequate answer in our resurrection and change at Christ's coming by the power of His resurrection. But on the other it is a real

slight of God's grace and of Christ's redemption to darken the condition of the disembodied soul in order to heighten the splendour of the resurrection morn. It is not true that the apostle when looking to the dissolution of his earthly tabernacle was comforted only by the building of God not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; for in this very context he shows that we choose rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord. And in fact inability to look at death or Satan in the face is a proof of weakness, not strength, of faith. The apostle does exactly the right thing in the Holy Ghost: for while he does present in the forefront the full triumph of life in Christ, he does not misrepresent departure to be with Him as bare and ghastly, or the state as airy, shadowy, or fantastical. It is of course unworldly, but not therefore inert; for it is to be with Christ which is far better than remaining in the flesh, though far short of the triumph we shall share when He comes. Never does the apostle treat it as sepulchral gloom and pale moonlight, which is the mere depreciation of the human spirit vexed with the perversity of such as blot the glorious hope of resurrection from their Bibles. Again, leaving out Christ. death is a parting, not a meeting; but is it a sorrowful parting if we go to be with Him in paradise? No doubt it is not our one hope; but is it then the cheerless parting, the sorrow without hope, which unbelief makes it? Such exaggeration is mischievous, most of all in those who call on the saints to wait for Christ's coming; for what is false in their statements acts powerfully to discredit what is true, and thus to hinder souls instead of helping them. The balance of truth is lost, and such as on scripture warrant look for the blessedness of those with Christ who fall asleep are stumbled by the doubt cast on

it and indisposed to receive what may be doubtless truly said of the triumphant result of His coming.

As death then will own itself vanquished in every saint, yea, mortality itself in the living saints be swallowed up of life when Christ comes, so even now death itself in no way hinders the saint from enjoying the presence of the Lord. Both truths are clearly revealed here and in this order. They are due to Him and the redemption He has accomplished for us; they are of the utmost moment for the heart of every saint. It is ignorance to overlook either; it is of the enemy to misuse one to destroy or enfeeble the other.

The parenthetic verse 7 has given much trouble to scholars, though the general sense is plain enough. But εἶδος in the New Testament, as in ordinary Greek authors, seems rarely if ever used like ὄψις for sight, but for “appearance” (as in Luke 9:29), or “form” (as in Luke 3:22; John 5:32, as also derivatively in an ethical sense in 1 Thess. 5:22). Every intelligent reader of Plato and Aristotle knows its philosophic bearing as modified by their respective theories. But “species,” or “sort,” or “form,” cannot be meant here. We are shut up therefore by New Testament usage to the alternative “appearance,” unless we admit the sense of “sight” with our authorised translators, though its occurrence in this subjective meaning seems doubtful in any author, sacred or profane. The substantial meaning however amounts to the same. We walk by faith, not by appearance, being absent from the Lord and heaven. If we look at the unseen and eternal, it is by faith, not on the things or persona themselves, as we shall when actually there.

Hence the apostle sums up with a somewhat irregular but all the more forcible emphasis, δέ being used like our “well,” or “why,” or “nay.” “We are confident and well pleased rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.” (Ver. 8.) Granted, that it is a state imperfect for man, and short of the glorious consummation according to the counsels of God. But grace has intervened even now; and as the God who spake light to shine out of darkness, shone in our hearts here below for the shining forth of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, so our departure is, if we value His presence, incomparable accession of enjoyment. For we go to no abode of dimness unworthy of Him and His blood, but to the brightest realms of heaven where He is in everlasting joy and glory. The Lord Jesus receives our spirits; as it is to be with Him. No wonder we are pleased rather to go from our home in the body, and to come to our home with the Lord.

“Wherefore also we are zealous, whether present or absent, to be agreeable to him.” (Ver. 9.) The common version conveys an utterly misleading idea, which if fully received would destroy the gospel; and the more so as φιλοτιμούμεθα is rendered “we labour” or “endeavour,” and εὐάρεστοι “accepted,” to the danger of insinuating salvation by works in the most bare-faced manner. Already accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1) we aspire — it is our zealous aim — to serve Him well, whether present or absent. This is in His hands, and our confidence either way is unbroken; but our ambition, if we have any in the Holy Ghost, is to be agreeable to Him. As His favour is better than life, so would we devote ourselves to His pleasure who delights only in what is good, holy, true, lowly and loving.

The apostle now introduces the very solemn consideration, not exactly of judgment, but of the judgment-seat of Christ. Judgment of course is included, but the judgment-seat embraces more, as we shall see.

“For we must all be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each may receive the things [done] in [literally, by] the body according to what he did, whether good or evil. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men; but we have been manifested to God, and I hope also to have been manifested in your consciences.” (Vers. 10, 11)

Grace is not at variance with righteousness, but on the contrary reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. Nor can any truth be more indisputable or universally applicable than the manifestation of every man, saint or sinner, before the Lord. There is the utmost precision in the language as always in scripture. Never is it written that we must all be judged. Indeed this would contradict the clear declaration of our Lord in John 5 that the believer has eternal life and does not come into judgment (εἰς κρίσιν οὐκ ἔρχεται). It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; whereas we, believers, are not all to die, but all to be changed: in fact, none of us alive when Christ comes shall fall asleep but be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven without passing through death, mortality being swallowed up of life. But if no believers shall be judged, all must be manifested, saint no less than sinner, that each may receive the things [done] by the body (or, as the Authorised Version says, done in it), according to what he did, whether good or bad.

Hence it may be noticed that the form of the phrase favours the universality of the manifestation. In 2 Corinthians 3:18, where no more is meant than all of us Christians, it is ἡμεῖς δὲ πάντες, whereas here it is τοὺς γὰρ πάντας ἡμᾶς, which lays greater stress on the totality, and makes it thus absolute. Accordingly the language suits the aim of comprehending Christians within an area which has no exception.

So again it is not a question of rewarding service as in 1 Corinthians 3:8, 14, but of retribution in the righteous government of God according to what each did whether good or bad. This covers all, just or unjust. It is for the divine glory that every work done by man should appear as it really is before Him who is ordained by God Judge of living and dead. Only as the believer is by grace exempted from judgment both as a partaker of everlasting life and as having in Jesus a perfectly efficacious Saviour, his standing before the judgment-seat assumes the character of manifestation, and in no way of a trial with the awful possibility of destruction. There is not the smallest compromise of the salvation he now enjoys by faith; and he is accordingly glorified before he stands there. He will give account of himself to God and be manifested; but there is no condemnation depending on the issue then, as there is none now to those that are in Christ. This may not be reasonable in man’s eyes, but it suits the God of all grace and is due to the glory and suffering of the Son of God, and harmonises with the testimony of the Holy Spirit, whose seal will not be broken or dishonoured in that day. And as it is for God’s glory, so it is for the perfect blessing of the believer that everything should stand out in the light and he himself should know even as he is known.

Nothing will blind the eye then, no unsuspected motive warp the heart or mind before the judgment-seat of Christ. The merciful care, the overruling power, of God in all our ways will appear in their astonishing wisdom and goodness, no longer concealed by the mists of this life. We shall know perfectly what debtors we were to grace, and the resources and activity of that grace in our chequered history and experience even as saints, and the boundless patience of God to the last, as well as His rich mercy at the first. Even now what a comfort for us to have renounced the dishonesty of the natural heart, to judge ourselves unsparingly in presence of love that never fails, to be in the light of God, and have no guile in our spirit as those who know Him who by redemption can and will impute nothing to us! And this is true to faith now that we believe in Him who suffered once for us that He might bring us to God: not a cloud above, not a spot within. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. Perfect love casts out fear. We love Him who first loved us, and shirk not but welcome the light which makes everything manifest. “We have been — we are — manifested to God.” It is the mighty and abiding effect of Christ’s work, which made us meet for sharing the inheritance of the saints in light. We no longer walk in darkness as once when we had on true knowledge of God; we walk in the light as He is in the light.

Yet are there times when what is always true in principle is applied powerfully in fact to the Christian whom God gives in quiet retirement, often in a sick chamber, to review his ways and examine himself alone with God, when energy or self-love or flattery do not enfeeble a holy self-judgment; and all the more deeply, as he firmly

holds to the assurance of God's changeless favour. What is thus verified in a high degree by the way will be complete and perfect at that day, when we already caught up and glorified in the body shall be manifested before the judgment-seat without a trace of the shame that either hides or with pain confesses. It is great gain to have such times on earth, though the process be but imperfect, greater still the more it approaches an habitual state. How full the blessing when all is absolutely out in love and light with Christ!

But, as we have seen, the manifestation has an end here described, that each may receive the things [done] in [or, by] the body, good or bad. Even in the saints all had not been good; and all has its result, though not to jeopard the grace that saved by Christ. But as God is not unrighteous to forget the work of faith and labour of love, so failure and wrong entail loss; and the soul itself will in full intelligence and unmurmuring adoration bow and bless Him who orders the place of each in the kingdom, and who (while never abandoning His own sovereignty) will take note of the greater or less fidelity and devotedness of each in service or ways.

Thus will God be vindicated, displayed and enjoyed in all that He is and does; and thus will the saint have perfect communion with all, in not a single detail any more than as a whole missing the joy and blessedness of what He is to all His own and to each for ever.

But the manifestation of the wicked, as it will be at a considerably later time, so it will have a wholly different character and effect. The judgment-seat in this case will be the judgment of the great white throne after the reign of the thousand years, as for the righteous it will

be before that, when the dead small and great are (not manifested only but) judged each according to their works. (Rev. 20) They refused the Saviour; they stood in their own righteousness or were indifferent about the lack of it, thinking nothing of God or counting Him like themselves. They had no life, as no faith, in Christ; they rise to a resurrection not of life but of judgment, for God will judge all who believe not by Him whom they despised. And if the righteous be saved with difficulty, with a difficulty which nothing but sovereign grace in Christ could surmount, where shall the ungodly and sinner appear? It is eternal judgment dealing with evil, and the issues are as sure as awful and endless.

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men; but we have been manifested to God, and I hope also to have been manifested in your consciences.” (Ver. 11)

The language here again confirms and necessitates the universality of the manifestation already noticed. For as there is no reason to soften down “the terror of the Lord,” so there seems no force in our persuading men if it does not mean the heart of the saint urged in love by the tremendous sense of divine judgment impending on the heedless yet guilty sinner. How deep and loud and constant the call for those who believe to arouse those who believe not, while the day of grace lingers, that they may not unwarned brave that judgment which will be their irremediable ruin to “persuade men” on the one hand of the wickedness, the folly, and the danger of sin; on the other of the reality and freeness, of the fulness and certainty, of salvation in Christ. Fearing always ourselves, no less than knowing His love, we realise for them what unbelief easily forgets till too late, and would

be therefore the more in earnest to call to repentance in the light of the gospel of God's grace. And in this we are the more free, because we have been and are manifested to God. Our guilt is gone; we are justified, and are children of light, though once darkness — light in the Lord. Hence we speak what we know and press a remedy, a deliverance, we have proved. We are already manifested to God; so that the manifestation before the judgment, let it be ever so profound or minute, awakens no alarm for ourselves but anxiety for "men," for all in their natural state, who have not Christ. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men; but we have been manifested to God; and I hope also to have been manifested in your consciences." A most pressing motive was that judgment-seat, with the terror of the Lord for men, to preach the gospel far and wide; and the more because consciously before God, as he humbly but not without a reproof adds, "and I hope also to have been manifested in your consciences." Of the former he was sure and speaks absolutely; of the other he could only say "I hope also," not because it ought to have been doubtful, but because their state was not all he could desire. And a state that is not good is apt to suspect evil in those who reprove it. The Corinthian saints, though in a measure restored and restoring, had not dealt with the apostle as became them. Love ought always to be able to count on love; but he had to say of them that, the more abundantly he loved them, the less he was loved.

The apostle felt, as we have seen, that he could appeal to their consciences, now that self-judgment was begun in the Corinthians. We have been and are manifested to God; and I hope also to have been manifested in your consciences. This might have seemed, to ill-disposed

men, savouring of self-complacency. It is really what every saint walking in the truth with integrity of heart is entitled to say, whatever an enemy might insinuate: a blessed state and statement doubtless; but what does not grace give to and effect in the Christian? And when strife and party-feeling are rebuked and hushed, conscience cannot but approve what is of God, even in those most defamed like the apostle. In this confidence of love he had written, and quickly guards the sheep from any misleading shaft; and this for their sakes rather than his own. A calumny indeed injures not the assailed, but those who are influenced by it.

“For we are not again commending ourselves to you, but giving you occasion to boast on our behalf, that ye may have [it] with those boasting in face and not in heart. For whether we are beside ourselves, [it is] to God; or are sober, [it is] for you. For the love of Christ constraineth us, having judged this, that if58 one died for all, then the all were dead [or, died]; and he died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to him who for them died and rose.” (Vers. 12-15.)

Nothing can be conceived more admirably than the apostle’s delicacy, as far from indifference to the saints as from lording it over them, and equally far from the arts of those who, while ingratiating themselves with the Corinthian assembly, in order to exalt their own reputation and lower the apostle, were blinded by the enemy to attribute to him their own unscrupulous ways. He loved the saints with an unsullied conscience and an unselfish heart, and he counted on their confidence, now that grace had begun to work restoratively. As he did not seek to commend himself by what he said of his ministry,

so neither did he again by appealing to their consciences as to his ways. He was but affording them occasion for boast, as he says, “on our behalf, that ye may have [it] with those that boast in face [or person], and not in heart.” (Ver. 12.) For, on the one hand, holiness and truth go together, care for God’s glory and love of His children; and, on the other, those who however fair in his presence aimed at undermining the apostle, were serving not the Master but their own belly.

But was he not inconsistent and capricious, at one time so ecstatic that none could follow his transports, at another so sedate as to chill his brethren and abridge their liberty? Not so; “For whether we are59 beside ourselves, [it is] to God; or are sober, [it is] for you.” (Ver. 13.) Cold is the heart that knows no rapture before God as one thinks of His grace in Christ. Such certainly was not St. Paul’s case, as we may see in many a doxology which interrupts a chain of closest reasoning, and yet more when the love of Christ or the counsels of God are before his eyes. But the same Paul can come down to the most ordinary questions of daily walk, can regulate the relations of husband and wife, or of master and slave, can prescribe for a weakly man, and cheek a woman’s taste for dress. There is one name, and but one, which draws out and accounts for both feelings, raising the heart above all that is seen and temporal, yet giving the most lively interest in the smallest detail of the life that now is. And He who, bears that name is both God and man in one person.

“For the love of Christ constraineth us, having judged this, that, if one died for all, then the all were dead [or, died]; and he died for all, that those who live should no

longer live to themselves, but to him who for them died and rose." (Vers. 14, 15.)

If transported when turning to God, the need of saints and desire for the Lord's glory in them awoke sober thoughts; nor this only, for the love of Christ urged his soul toward men, sinners no less than saints, in loving service and faithful testimony of the truth. If there was the solemnity of manifestation before the judgment-seat of Christ, there was the constraining energy of His love. There was no vain conceit of man's improveableness, no crying up of intellectual culture, nor even the most distant hope of good from further moral training. He had judged this that, if one died for all, then the all died or were dead. Christ's death for all is the proof that it was all over with mankind. If He went down in grace to the grave, it was just because men were already there, and none otherwise could be delivered. In this way of death is Christ here known, not a living Messiah to reign over the quick, but One who died for all, for all were under death; and it is a question of man universally, not of Israel only, and of the power and triumph of life in Christ over death.

Hence, if nothing short of this is the judgment of the Christian as of the apostle, if there is no slighting of the fatal effects of sin, if death is seen and owned to be written on all, the death of Christ, though so unsparing in its import becomes the ground of deliverance; for we have judged also that He died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves. There is then life in Him risen, and this not in Him only, but for those who believe. He is our life. And such is the meaning of "those who live;" not merely those alive on earth (though this

be implied, of course) but living of His life, in contrast with “all dead.”

It is contended, as I am aware, that

ἀπέθανον can only mean “died,” and not “are” or “were dead.” But this is an oversight from pressing too technically the aoristic force, so as to clash with English idiom. We may see how harsh it would be to absolutely reduce us to the English preterite by a glance at the same or a kindred word in the case of Jairus’ daughter. Even the most servile of translators gives us Matthew 9:18 as “My daughter is just dead” (ἄρτι ἐτελεύτησεν), though he represents verse 24, “For the maid did not die but is sleeping” (οὐ γὰρ απέθανεν); and Mark 5 as “My daughter is dead” (ver. 35), but “The child did not die” (ver. 39); and Luke 8, She did not die.” Is it not evident that the nature of the case modifies the aorist? Although strictly ἀπέθανεν expresses only the fact that one died, still, death being for the present final, it may be used for, as it implies, the condition of death: if one died, one is dead. But where express precision is intended, the perfect appears as in Luke 8:49, “My daughter is dead,” τέθνηκεν. Yet in verses 52, 53, it is in both cases ἀπέθανεν. To say here “She did not die,” and “she did die,” is mere pedantry, not good English; and in this connection the Authorised Version more fittingly gives “she is not dead,” and “she was dead.” It is not that the aorist is ever used with impropriety, or confounded with the perfect; but that the fact in Greek is enough, where English gives the state.

The same thing is no less appropriate here, where death spiritually, not physically, is in question. Grammar does not touch the question, whether the death is of all men

as such, or of the saints; ἀπέθανον might be used either of death by sin or of death to sin. There was intention, it seems, in retaining the same word for all as for Christ, though a different expression for men might have been used, as in Ephesians 2. But this would have interfered with the aim, which is as much as possible to link His death in grace with theirs in sin.60 “If one died for all, then the all died,” or “were dead.” And that this is the universal condition of mankind, is made the more apparent by the further judgment that He died for all, that those who live, etc. It is not ζῶντες as including all for whom He died, but οἱ ζῶντες as some out of all, “those that live” in contradistinction to all dead. It is the solemn judgment of faith that all are dead, whatever appearances may say; it is its no less sure but happy judgment that Christ died for all, that those who live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him who for them died and rose. What men call a judgment of charity is Satan’s cheat, and as far from the truth as from real love. It is the delusion of trusting appearance and feeling and reason against God’s word. True love according to God owns that all are dead, but in the faith of Christ’s death seeks that others too might believe and live, and that those who live should live to Christ.

The reader will observe that Christ’s resurrection is associated only with “those who live.” This again confirms the special class of the living, as only included in, and not identical with, all for whom He died. Those who would narrow the all for whom He died to the elect, lose the first truth; those who see the special blessedness but responsibility of the saints, those that live, lose the second. He died for all; He was raised again for the justifying of those who believe, and who

consequently had life in Him; that they might live no longer to themselves, as of old in their sinful folly, but to their dead and risen Saviour. It was not only “the terror of the Lord” that acted on the apostle’s soul, but the constraining love of Christ. His outgoings of heart, and labours of love were not bounded by the church, however dear to him; as we saw, he would not only feed the flock, but “persuade men.” He knew what the judgment-seat must be to sinful man, but he knew also the efficacy of Christ’s death, and the power of His resurrection. If Christ died for all, he earnestly sought all, and preached to all, urgent in season and out of season. The judgment which faith gave him seems therefore, like the context before and after, to take in all men, no less than the saints; whereas another line is brought in, out of harmony with what we have, if we speak of death to sin only, limiting the range of the first clause to the elect, instead of seeing its universality.

Thus the apostle sees death come in for all, and judgment awaiting men as such; and, because this was the fact for all, Christ dead for all. Promises avail not, nor the kingdom: so complete is man’s ruin. Else a living Messiah would have sufficed. But no! only a Saviour that died could meet the case; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live to themselves, but to Him who for them died and rose. This closes the door, not for Him only who died, but for those that by and in Him live, on the world and man. Not “all” alas! but only “those who live,” really live to Him who died and rose for them. All outside Him and them is death; and they, now living, are called to live to Him: how could those who rejecting Him have not life?

This is practical Christianity. They are bound, as they owe all, to the Saviour, but to Him not in this world, but gone out of it as dead and risen for them. It is Christ who determines and characterises all for the Christian. It is not Christ as He was when coming into the world on this side of the grave; nor Christ as He will govern the world by-and-by in power and glory, but Christ who for them died and rose. Thus is He known to the Christian, and thus is the Christian to live. Nor is it, as sense and tradition reckon, that in the midst of life we are in death, or exposed to it, but that now in the midst of death we by grace live, but would live and own our obligation to live to Him who dead and risen is in a new sphere, to which we too belong, though still on earth, as the apostle proceeds to set forth, man as well as self being done with to faith, and ourselves belonging to Him. Thus He who is the source of life is also the object of life to the Christian; and this in His full character of death and resurrection, so as to act the more on the affections. For if He died for us in grace, He rose for us in power, that we might devote ourselves thus set free to His service and glory.

The sin of Adam ruined creation here below. It fell in its head. Not less but more, as is due to the surpassing glory of His person, has the death and resurrection of Christ changed all gloriously for faith. The apostle draws the consequence for the present characteristic knowledge of the Christian.

“So that we henceforth know no one as to flesh:61 if we have even known Christ as to flesh, yet now are no longer knowing [him]; so that, if one [is] in Christ, [there is] a new creation; the old things passed; behold, they [or, all things]62 are become new.” (Vers. 16, 17.)

Man as he is in his present life, with all its objects, pursuits, and interests, is morally judged in the cross of Christ, where alone God is glorified as to sin. Where are earthly rank, grandeur and power? Where are intellectual activity and learned attainment? Where is mental acuteness or far-reaching all-embracing thought? Where the wisdom of the wise, or the understanding of the prudent? Where even are moral exercise, and reverence in religion? All are closed in death, all proved worthless in presence of perfect holiness and most lowly love. It is no question now of thunders and lightnings, and of Jehovah descending in fire, and every heart quaking for fear. The same God descended in grace, yet all that was of man cast Him out in the person of Jesus; and so death is stamped on all. Man judged himself in judging Him, and proved his own worthlessness, either with the pride of vain knowledge, in not knowing Him who made the world, or in receiving Him not, whom the living oracles attested and every testimony that should have gone home if man had not been deaf, yea, dead. Christ's death under man's guilty hand proved the moral death of all; and as all played their part in it, so all were sentenced before God by it.

But He is risen; and thus by divine power and grace a door is opened, not of hope merely, but of life and salvation in the midst of a waste of death. Doubtless the mass of men go on as heedless as ever, the Gentiles abusing their power, the Jews striving to drown their judicial misery; but we, if none else, by faith beholding the dead and risen Christ, are in the secret of God now so clearly revealed in His word; we, perhaps primarily the apostle and his fellow-labourers, but we Christians also in contrast with all under death. Beyond question

Paul entered into the full truth of all this, as no one else did; but surely it is no apostolic prerogative to know none according to flesh, to value nothing before God which flows not from Him who is risen from the dead.

The apostle goes even farther. “But if even we have known Christ as to flesh, yet now no longer know we him.” This is so strong that it is impossible to go beyond it. For Christ was the just cause of every expectation of blessing here below. In Him all promises centred, not only a rod out of Jesse’s stem, but a root of Jesse, to which the Gentiles should seek. All hopes for men living on the earth were buried in the grave of Christ: not because of any defect of power or grace in Him, but because man is dead Godward, and how could He reign at God’s expense? How take pleasure in governing a nature at enmity with God? No; He died, not only as the full witness of man’s state, but to lay a righteous ground of deliverance to God’s glory.

No doubt the Jews looked for Him to reign after an earthly sort, exalting the chosen nation of whom He is the chief. But we know Him only as a dead and risen Christ; and if even, as the apostle adds, we have known Him according to flesh, that is, on this side the grave, yet now we know Him so no more. Our association is with Him in that new and heavenly glory, where the death through which He passed has met our evil, and now He is risen and gone on high, and our life is bid with Him in God. The apostle does not say that He ever did not know the Lord thus; but that, if it were even so, we now only know Him as the risen and heavenly Christ. The lustre of an earthly Messiah was quite swallowed up in the surpassing glory of His now place and condition. And this it is which imprints its heavenly character on

Christianity. “As is the Heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly.” Had we been Israelites, of the tribe of Judah, of the family of David, we know Christ now in a brightness beyond the sun at noon-day, which utterly dims the light of promise to which we had formerly turned fondly with all our souls.

Nor is this all; for there is power in Him as well as an object that we know. It is not a question of apprehending Christ no more as Messiah, nor even of only knowing Him above. The life that is in Him has won the victory for us already and entitled us to regard and speak of ourselves according to His new estate. So that, if one is in Christ, [there is] a new creation the old things passed; behold, they [or, all things together] are become new.” We do not wait for the kingdom, still less the eternal state, before we know and can say so if any are in Christ, as every Christian is. A new creation can be predicated of such an one, Christ in risen and heavenly glory being the Head. What is true of Him can be said of His, as being in Him. The old things have passed; behold, all things together (τὰ π.) are become now. Faith sees the end from the beginning and looks for all the consequences according to Christ risen. It is no question, as so many make it, of examining ourselves within and seeing how completely we are changed in principles and path as well as spirit and end, since we believed in Christ, though there is a vital change and self-judgment be incumbent on us. It is what faith knows and can say, because of being “in Christ” and knowing Him only as risen, not connected with man on the earth, for this is closed in His death for ever. It is true of “any one in Christ.” Whatever he may have been, Gentile or Jew matters not; if in Christ, there is a new creation, and

from the starting-point the end is as sure as the beginning is the great all-including fact in Christ's person.

The marginal reading, "let them be" a new creature, was probably due to Calvin, whose notion at any rate agrees with it; but it destroys all the force and beauty of the passage by making it no more than exhortation. On the other hand, it is no question of mere experience, which would reduce the language miserably. It is faith judging and speaking according to Christ, in whom the believer is. Thus new creation has all its scope. But it is of all moment to be ever measuring and forming experience by faith, and not to lower faith by experience.

Nor is it a question of new creation alone, great as is the power requisite for it, and precious as its exercise is in presence of death and ruin. Man can avail nothing. It is a question therefore of God; and love and righteousness would reconcile the lost and guilty foes to God, without which His glory must be compromised. Hence it is written, after "all things [or, they] are become now," "And they all [are] of God that reconciled us to himself by Christ63 and gave to us the ministry of the reconciliation: how that it was God in Christ reconciling [the] world to himself, not reckoning to them their offences, and putting in us the word of the reconciliation. For Christ then we are ambassadors, God as it were beseeching by us, we entreat for Christ, Be reconciled to God: him64 that knew not sin he made sin for us, that we might become65 God's righteousness in him." (Vers. 18-21.)

One object of reconciliation, as we read in Col. 1 embraces all things in heaven and on earth. But this is

future, and awaits the appearing of Christ. Meanwhile believers are already reconciled, being not only born of God but redeemed. In virtue of the work of Christ God can act freely, not reinstating merely but making good their relationship, as it suits His own nature as well as theirs, according to His love and for His glory. Traditional orthodoxy errs in insisting on the death of Christ to reconcile His Father to us. Scripture never speaks thus. But if it declares that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son in order that the believer should not perish but have everlasting life, it is no less peremptory that the Son of man must be lifted up in order to the same blessed result. (John 3:14-16.) Still more dangerous is the error which leaves out that God is light in the anxiety to press that He is love. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. We must not let the needed expiation of our sins by the blood of Christ be weakened by the blessed fact that we are also reconciled to God. The enmity was on our side, not on His; but what was our evil nature, what our sins, in His eyes? Does not God abhor iniquity and rebelliousness, hypocritical form or even indifference to His will? And, if He abhor, has He no majesty to vindicate, nor authority to judge? After sin and before judgment came Christ, who gave Himself up not only to manifest God in this world but to suffer on the cross. Hence, instead of nothing but righteous judgment awaiting guilty man at the end, the Lord Jesus has so met and even glorified God as to sin in His death, that divine righteousness now justifies the believer; and the reconciliation is so complete that in virtue of His redemption we stand in a wholly new relationship which derives its character from Christ risen from the dead. In due time all things in heaven and on earth shall be made

new accordingly. Even now if one is in Christ, it is a new creation. The rest will follow in its season, whether for our body, or for heaven and earth; but for us reconciliation is a fact now. God reconciled us to Himself by Christ, as surely as He gave the ministry of reconciliation.

For the saving grace of God has a service suited to itself. It does not, like the law, govern a people already in relationship with God; it calls, as Christ did, not the righteous but sinners to repentance. The word of truth it proclaims for all to hear is the gospel of salvation; and those who hear not only live but are saved by grace through faith, quickened with Christ, raised up together, and made to sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, that God might display in the coming ages the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Reconciliation therefore is a term of rich meaning, and goes far beyond repentance or faith, quickening or justification. It is, if we may borrow the figure which lies at the root of the word, God’s settlement of account in favour of him who, if he have nothing to pay, submits to His righteousness. Divine love in Christ has undertaken all and has set down the enemy and lost one, not only in deliverance, but in full favour, boasting in hope of God’s glory, yea even now in God Himself through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is not a question of our dispositions and feelings only but of relationship with God, out of which we were as sinners, into which His grace has now brought us who believe, not according to Adam unfallen, but according to Christ dead, risen, and glorified, in virtue of His redemption outside us, though of course not without our being born anew.

But let us follow the apostle's explanation of the ministry of reconciliation: "How that it was God in Christ reconciling [the] 66world to himself, not reckoning to them their offences, and having put in us the word of the reconciliation." (Ver. 19.) By a change of form in the participles, there appears to be intimated, first, the continuous aspect of Christ's presence here below, and, secondly, the gospel charge deposited in His servants when He was no longer here. God put in us, says the apostle, the word of the reconciliation. But what was He doing when the Reconciler Himself was here? It was not the law, which forbade all approach and registered every transgression; it was God (or, God was) in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offences. This is not Christ's death, but His living presence; nor is it consequently that He reconciled the believers by His death, but the bearing of God in Him toward not Jews only but a guilty rebellious world; and it was reconciling — Jew or Gentile, it matters not, if it was God there and thus in Christ — reconciling the world, and consequently not reckoning to them their offences. Was it not thus He bore Himself to the woman in Luke 7? to the Samaritans in John 4? But why enumerate? It was His special aspect in Christ here below, dealing in grace, not law, and hence indiscriminately, not reckoning to them their offences. On the one hand, He came to seek and to save the lost; on the other "him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." For the bread of God is He that came down from heaven and gives life to the world. As He was far beyond the rnanna, angels' food (Ps. 78:25), so He is for the world, not for Israel only. For this is the will of His Father' that every one that sees the Son and believes on Him should have life eternal, and He will raise him up at

the last day. Christ's presence, or God's in Him, was the full proof that fallen man is irremediable. Before the flood he was left to himself; and such was the corruption and violence that God had to sweep all away, save Noah's family in the ark. After the flood in due time the great trial of law was carried on in the chosen and separate nation; but they transgressed in every way, people and priests, judges and kings, till there was "no remedy," even after prophet on prophet was sent in patience truly divine. Last of all He sent to them His Son, saying, They will reverence My Son. But when the husbandmen saw Him, they said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance. And they caught Him, and cast Him out of the vineyard and slew Him. When the lord therefore of the vineyard comes, what will He do to those husbandmen?

Such is the divine account of human responsibility as tested in Israel even till judgment. But the display of grace in Christ here below is no less true and of infinite moment; and man's rejection of God in grace was as evident and complete as his total failure under law. For though Christ was here and the fulness of grace and truth in Him, receiving publicans and sinners, not reckoning to them their offences, they crucified Him as they had forsaken Jehovah for an idol.

But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; and over human iniquity at its worst God triumphs in Christ, yea in His cross. Hence, when the Son of man was cast out of the world, when it is no longer God in Christ reconciling the world and rising above every offence, He put the word of the reconciliation in chosen vessels; and as we have had the character of God's

action in Christ in the days of His flesh, so here follows their character as sent out to testify of Him. “For Christ then we are ambassadors, God as it were beseeching by us, we entreat for Christ, Be reconciled to God: him that knew not sin he made sin for us, that we might become God’s righteousness in him.” (Vers. 20, 21.) The dignity is indeed great. They represent, not Levites, nor priests, nor yet the high priest, but Christ dead and risen, and this in the aspect of divine grace, God as it were (it was not meet to speak absolutely) beseeching by us: we entreat on behalf, or instead, of Christ, Be reconciled to God. Such is the gospel call to the world in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. The grace of God and of Christ is stamped on every word; and human assumption as wholly excluded from its nature, as human worth or means from that new creation where all things are of God, flowing through Christ risen from the dead.

Calvin expounded verse 20 as the apostle addressing himself to believers. He declares that he brings to them this embassy every day. Christ therefore did not suffer that He might expiate our sins once only, nor was the gospel ordained merely with a view to the pardon of those sins which we committed previously to baptism, but that, as we daily sin, so we might also by a daily remission be received by God into His favour. For this is a perpetual embassy, which must be assiduously sounded forth in the church till the end of the world; and the gospel cannot be preached unless remission of sins is promised.67 This is as great at an error, if not so pernicious, as the broad-church rationalism which teaches that the world is reconciled to God. The contrary of this last appears from this very verse. The

apostle exemplifies the gospel call he was commissioned to declare in the words, Be reconciled to God. This exhortation does imply that they were not yet reconciled; and no boldness of assertion, no tortuous reasoning, can elude the plain expression of scripture. Not less plainly does the apostle contradict the first error in verse 18, which states that God reconciled us to Himself by Christ — a fact accomplished for the believer, as other scriptures treating of the subject confirm. It is false that the apostle is here addressing himself to believers; he is giving a specimen of the true call to the unconverted. Neither here nor anywhere else does he testify that he brings to the saints such an embassy as this every day.

Another apostle, not less truly inspired of God, expressly declares that Christ did once suffer for sins; as the Epistle to the Hebrews (Heb. 10:11-14) pointedly sets aside the Judaism of a daily provision to meet daily sins by the revelation that Christ, having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down in perpetuity (εἰς τὸ διηνεκές) at God's right hand.... for by one offering He has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified. It is not denied that we need our feet washed day by day, to use the expressive figure of our Lord; but this is the washing of water by the word in answer to His advocacy, not a fresh application of blood or another reconciliation into God's favour: strange doctrine from the head of Calvinism. The truth is that none of the Reformers knew the blessed comfort of Christ's having come by water as well as blood; and the effort to make the blood do the work of the water also has impaired in the minds of Protestants generally the full efficacy of the blood that cleanses from every sin. Of Romanists we need not

speak, as they refused to profit by the candle of the Reformation.

It will be noticed that the critical text drops the argumentative particle with which the Authorised Version opens the last verse. The sentence is not so much a reason for the call that precedes as an explanation which the apostle adds in continuance, yet more enforcing the call. Him that knew no sin — not merely is it a fact, but no other supposition is admissible — He [God] made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him: a most full and blessed statement of the way in which grace secured its victory when guilty man seemed to have lost the last possible hope through Christ, by rejecting Him even on His errand of reconciling love. In that rejection to the death of the cross God wrought another thing, even atonement; He made Christ sin, laying for us His solemn unsparing judgment of sin on His holy head, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Thus was our reconciliation effected by propitiation and substitution, the two goats of atonement-day, which find their meaning in the work of Christ on the cross, as we may see both parts distinguished in Hebrews 9:26-28. He became a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles in Christ Jesus. (Gal. 3:13, 14.)

The aoristic, not present, subj. is the true form, for "we might become," as all critics allow following every manuscript of value. Why Scholz and others read γινώμεθα, it is hard to say, for every authority he cites is against him. Indeed it would be hard to show what manuscript reads the present, not even Matthaei or Scrivener citing a single cursive for it. Yet Dr. Hodge

also says the apostle uses the present tense, because this justification is continuous: doctrine and criticism equally erroneous. For Christian justification is regularly spoken of as past, e.g. in Romans 5 as a fact, in Romans 6 as a state. But this last is the perfect. Where the present is used, it is abstract.

The Christian will notice the peculiar manner in which God's righteousness is here predicated of "us." Elsewhere it is what is revealed in the gospel, and declared both to vindicate His dealings with saints of old and still more fully at this time. (Rom. 1, 3) It is what the zealous but unbroken Jew did not submit to (Romans 10), losing that blessing in refusing Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us righteousness and all else we need. (1 Cor. 1) It is of God by faith, in contrast with one's own. (Phil. 3) But here and here only are we said to become such, a fact as truly accomplished in the believer as the incomparable work of Him in whom He believes. Christ in virtue of His work was set at God's right hand in heaven: no other seat was adequate to express God's sense of His death in which sin was judged and God for ever glorified. Therefore did He raise Christ from the dead and set Him in the heavenlies; or, as the Lord said, the Spirit should convict the world of righteousness by His going to His Father and their seeing Him no more. Had there been righteousness here, the world would have received Christ to reign; but the world proved itself under Satan's dominion by casting Him out, as God showed His righteousness by receiving Him in the highest place above; and there, associated with Him, we become God's righteousness in Him. His righteousness wrought not only in thus exalting Christ but in justifying us

according to Him. Nothing can exceed the energy of the inspired expression as to both sin and righteousness to the Saviour's praise and our blessedness.

2 Corinthians 6

The apostle now follows up the striking specimen he had given of the ministry of reconciliation toward the close of 2 Corinthians 5 by an appeal to the Corinthians themselves. There we saw how erroneous it is to treat verse 20 as a call to the saints; for he is illustrating the word they had to preach to the world. Here the opposite error is common through fear of compromising the security of the believer; and the more so, as men like Olshausen say, It is undeniable that the apostle assumes that grace when once received may be lost: the scriptures know nothing of the dangerous error of the advocates of predestination, that grace cannot be lost; and experience stamps it as a lie. This the more orthodox Calvinist, like Hodge, attempts to meet by saying that the apostle is only exhorting men not to let God's grace be to no purpose in making His Son sin, as it regarded them; that is, that a satisfaction for sin sufficient for all and appropriate to all had been made and offered to all in the gospel. But this is incorrect. It is a direct exhortation to the Corinthians, and not a declaration of the method in which the apostle preached, like the concluding verses of the preceding chapter. He is not exhorting all men, but the Corinthians who bore the Lord's name not to receive the grace of God in vain. Were there no ὑμᾶς, "you," expressed, it might be so argued; but there it stands, not in 2 Corinthians 5:20 but here, a distinct and effectual disproof of those who would assimilate the two; and its

reserve to the last place gives such an emphasis to the pronoun that the only wonder is how grave and godly men should have ignored its force. The aorist inf. δέξεσθαι does not necessarily imply, as Meyer alleges in at least an early edition, a past reception of His grace, but may mean the act complete and decisive irrespective of time, which is thoroughly if not more consistent with the application to the Corinthians. What the apostle has in view is the danger of easy-going self-satisfaction in those who already called on the name of the Lord. So He Himself in the parabolic marriage of the king's son had warned, first, of despising or maltreating the messengers of the gospel; secondly, of indifference to what alone suits those who come, of wearing one's own garments instead of having put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism would aggravate, not hinder, the most condign judgment.

"And working together we also beseech that ye receive not in vain the grace of God (for he saith, In an acceptable season I listened to thee, and in a day of salvation I helped thee: behold, now aright acceptable season; behold, now a day of salvation), giving none offence in anything that the ministry be not blamed." (Vers. 1-3.)

There is no authority for inserting "with him" as in the italics of the Authorised Version, though supported by many commentators.68 It is an unscriptural familiarity, if not irreverent. 1 Corinthians 3:9 gives it no real countenance; for the messengers are said to be, not fellow-workers with God, but His fellow-workmen, or journeymen together doing His work. So here, but by and on behalf of Him they work together, and exhort not men only to believe the gospel, but those who already

professed faith not to receive His grace in vain. And “beseeching,” while just applied to those without in token of the incomparable goodness of God to His enemies, is not less suitable in urging on His professing saints to beware of all inconsistent with His grace. The security of His children is unquestionable, not so much through their perseverance as men say, but by His power through faith: but the Corinthians needed and received faithful entreaty, for their ways were not such as became the gospel. They were compromising His glory who Lad called them to the fellowship of His Son; and the apostle, instead of comforting them with the blessed assurances at the close of Romans 8, would here exercise conscience as well as affection in presence of God’s grace.

Nor is this enfeebled but strengthened by the following verse in which Isaiah 49:8 is applied. It is a quotation from that section of the prophecy in which Jehovah arraigns the Jews not for idolatry but for rejecting the Messiah; and it is affirmed to be a light thing in consequence to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel. Jehovah would also give Him, thus cast off by His own people, for a light to the Gentiles, that He might be His salvation unto the end of the earth. If man despised and the nation [Israel] abhorred, His glory as on earth should be secured among kings and princes, whereon follows the word here cited. It is the principle, not the mere fact, which is taken up.

There is no need of supposing in this case that a promise to the Messiah included at the same time His people, though we see how strikingly this appears in the use made of Isaiah 50 by the apostle in Romans 8. Here the

blessing to the Gentiles is expressly mentioned, so that it seems more akin to James's use of Amos 9:11, 12, in Acts 15. And this is confirmed, it would appear, by the fact that the apostle breaks forth into a strong expression of the grace God is now showing, surpassing as it does the actual fulfilment in the days of the kingdom, when the earth shall be raised and the desolate heritage is enjoyed; when the prisoners shall go forth and those in darkness show themselves; when hunger and thirst shall be no more, and heat and sun shall not smite, but the merciful Jehovah shall guide even by the springs of waters; when the mountains shall be made a way, and the scattered return from every quarter under heaven; when the heavens themselves shall sing and the earth be joyful in Jehovah's mercy and comfort for His afflicted people. Yet in presence of such an anticipation, bright as it was in the apostle's heart, there shone a light brighter by far in Him who is exalted into a new and higher glory at God's right hand, which leads him to say, "Behold now a right acceptable season, behold now a day of salvation:" words suggested by the prophecy, but designedly rising above them in strength as expressive of God's present display of grace in the gospel.

Then, resuming the thread of his exhortation to the Corinthians, the apostle shows how far he was from refusing to measure himself and his service by that which he meted to others, "Giving none offence in anything, that the ministry be not blamed." Who knew better that inconsistency above all things undermines preaching or teaching? Christianity is real and living, not dogmatic only, still less official: else it becomes of all things the most contemptible; just as when genuine it is

heavenly and of the Holy Spirit, as the moral expression of Christ in those that are His. In Moses' chair sat the scribes and the Pharisees: it was a duty to do and keep all things whatever they might bid, whilst not doing according to their works; for they said and did not. But unreality, as it is a lie against Christ, destroys the weight of christian teaching, which derives its power from the Spirit of God. And no more eminent witness of his own words ever lived than the apostle, not more to endure the heaviest burdens for Christ's sake than to bear those of any or of all others. His life, not only as a whole but in every detail, was a comment on his ministry; and who so vigilant to out off occasion from those who sought it?

It is a right and needed thing to begin with giving no offence in anything which might occasion blame to the ministry. How often there is unguardedness of which the enemy takes advantage, against not merely the servant but the objects of his work and above all the Master whom He serves! The apostle however would go much farther: —

"But in everything as ministers of God commending ourselves, in much patience, in affliction, in necessities, in straits, in stripes, in prisons, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, in pureness, in knowledge, in long-suffering, in kindness, in [the] Holy Ghost, in love unfeigned, in [the] word of truth, in [the] power of God." (Vers. 4-7.)

Earlier in the Epistle (2 Cor. 3) we have seen the character of the ministry. In contrast with the ministry of death and condemnation, as set out in the law graven on stone, it is of the Spirit and of righteousness, the Spirit given and righteousness revealed to the believer in

virtue of Christ's redemption. Later (2 Cor. 5) we saw its source in the God who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and gave to suited instruments, called and qualified by sovereign grace, the ministry of the reconciliation: how that it was God in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offences, and having put in us the word of the reconciliation. And as all the thoughts and feelings of men fall immeasurably short of the simple but deep truth of God here made known, so does the apostolic statement of the spirit and manner of its exercise rise above all the practices and theories of Christendom, never so alien, never so low, as when it indulges in the haughtiest pride. And no wonder, for it is then most remote from Christ; and Christ here as everywhere alone gives us the truth. Under law priesthood was the characteristic, the intervention of a representative class charged with maintaining before God the interests of His people who could not draw near into His holy presence for their own wants or His blessing. Under the gospel ministry is no less characteristic, as being the instrument of God's active love, both in reconciling His enemies as it goes out to the whole creation under heaven, and in building up the faithful who in one Spirit were all baptized into one body and were all given to drink into one Spirit. Christ is the fullest expression of this love in its activity both, to the world and to the saints; and those who desire the will and the glory of God have Him before their eyes as the test of all.

So we know it was with the apostle; and such is the revelation here of the spirit in which God would have His ministry exercised. He never meant it only for the pulpit, as men say, nor for set occasions, nor in a little or

a larger sphere of one's own, nor as a matter of vested rights or of personal authority. Conversion did not of itself correct the tendency even in the apostles toward a direction the most opposed to Christ. "There was also a strife among them which should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth." (Luke 22) So here the first quality set before us is "in everything as ministers of God commending ourselves;" if not as His ministers, what are we? Worse than useless. And that as a fixed purpose of the soul, not now and then, nor in specified duties only, but in everything as God's ministers commending ourselves.

It maybe noticed that in this version "as God's ministers" is placed before the participle, whereas in Greek it follows. The reason is that our idiom does not admit of the order which is correct in the original because of its definite case-ending. The Authorised Version really expresses ὡς θεοῦ διακόνους which is the reading of the Clermont manuscript, and the more extraordinary, because the corresponding Latin is "sicut Di [Dei] ministri." The Vulgate falls into the error of translating ὡς θ. διάκονοι "sicut Dei ministros." If the same order were sought in English as in Greek, it would necessitate, I think, the addition of "should;" for there is a difference of sense attaching to the difference of construction, and the apostolic phrase expresses

precisely what the context requires. Were it the accusative, διακόνους, the meaning would be commending ourselves69 as competent to be God's ministers, whereas with the nominative διάκονοι, as it is, the force is that in everything we in the capacity of His ministers commend ourselves, etc.

What then is the prime quality which is looked for? "In much patience" or "endurance." So the apostle in 2 Corinthians 12:12, where he sets "all endurance," or patience, before signs and wonders and works of power as apostolic vouchers. God Himself is called the God of patience no less than of comfort or encouragement, and this with a view to grant the saints to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus; nor is there a happier proof of moral power in His servants than such constancy in the face of suffering, opposition, trial and temptation. When impatient, one is overcome of evil instead of overcoming it with good in the lowliest form.

Then follows a threefold cord of the several ways in which endurance is put to the proof: "in afflictions, in necessities, in straits." "Afflictions" or tribulations (θλίψεις) are cases of pressure which every saint has in the world. We are set for this, and must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God. Necessities (ἀνάγκαι) express distresses which take the shape of need or constraint, and so, as the early Greek writers noticed, indicate an advance in suffering; as straits (στενοχώριαι) point to such troubles as shut a man up without space to move or turn.70 Next come specific inflictions, "in stripes, in prisons, in tumults." As to the first of these three, the apostle further gives us the fact that from the Jews he five times had received forty stripes save one, and been scourged thrice. As to

“prisons,” we know of but one, recorded minutely in Acts 16, doubtless for its momentous connection with the first planting of the gospel in Philippi; but 2 Corinthians 11:23 speaks of the apostle’s being “in prisons more frequent,” so that we know such shame to have been abundantly his lot. There remains in tumults” (ἀκαταστασίαις), which some apply to the forced changes of the apostle’s unsettled life, comparing 1 Corinthians 4:11 with Isaiah 54:11, Isaiah 70. And so not moderns only, but apparently Chrysostom. Nevertheless New Testament usage does not support such a meaning, but either a “riot” in the world or “confusion” among saints; and here the context confirms the former: a trial shocking to one of well-ordered habits. But we see in the Acts how often it befell the apostle in his preachings; and doubtless very much more frequently than that history records.

Then we pass on from inflicted to voluntary trials, “in labours, in watchings, in fastings,” which are not the least witness to sustained devotedness. The language so clearly intimates one’s own agency here that it might have seemed needless to say a word more. But scripture fares as no other book; and this at the hands of friends as well as foes. Dr. Bloomfield will have it that this application to voluntary sufferings is, not only unfounded, but devised to afford countenance to monkish austerities; and that κ. may very well refer to his corporal labours at his trade, ἀγρ. to the abridgment of rest to make up by over-hours at night for evangelising by day, and ν. to the scanty fare that must follow such a trade. But 2 Corinthians “is the true parallel, and not merely 1 Corinthians 4; and in the former we have “fasting” distinguished expressly from

“hunger and thirst,” clearly as voluntary from involuntary suffering. No! the apostle’s “labours, watchings, fastings,” had to do with the gospel and the church, as well as individual souls, and were quite above the circumstances of trade good or bad.

But now we turn from circumstances and sufferings to quite another class, to qualities which God looks for in His service: “in pureness, in knowledge, in longsuffering, in kindness, in love unfeigned, in [the] Holy Ghost, in [the] word of truth, in [the] power of God.” There is thus not only perseverance in the face of antagonism and enmity, but the exercise of all that is holy and wise, long-suffering and gracious, and all this, not in mere amiability but in love unfeigned, yea in the Holy Spirit, and hence in the word of truth and in God’s power, not more human wisdom and ability, that its excellency might be of Him, and not from the man though by him.

There is a slight change in the middle of verse 7 indicated by a difference in the preposition and beginning with the needed arms of the christian servant. We have ἐν (“in” or “by”) no longer, but διά. Even the latter cannot here, or elsewhere, be restricted to the sense of “by means of;” for though this might suit the first occurrence, it does not fit in with the two which follow, but rather “through,” or “with” as with the genitive it sometimes means (as in 2 Cor. 2:4).

“Through [or, with] the arms of righteousness on the right and left, through glory and dishonour, through ill report and good report, as deceivers and true, as unknown and well-known, as dying and behold we live, as chastened and not put to death, as grieved but always

rejoicing, as poor but enriching many, as having nothing and possessing all things." (Vers. 7-10.)

As the Holy Ghost naturally precedes love unfeigned, and the word of truth is accompanied by the "power of God," so "the arms of righteousness" in full equipment follow. Some here as elsewhere take "righteousness" as that which is secured by justification before God. But this is to mistake both the figure and the context. As a figure it is a mistake, inasmuch as armour is used to protect one against the assaults of an enemy, which God assuredly is not to the believer. Hence, where we have details as in Ephesians 6, we see beyond controversy that we are told to put on the armour in order to withstand the powers and wiles of evil; not to stand before God, in which case we hear of a robe, not of arms. Clearly then righteousness in the practical sense is in question, rather than the righteousness of God. And the context equally requires it; because the apostle is insisting here, not on the standing of the believer, but on the avoidance of all which could expose the ministry to reproach, and on the cultivation of all that should approve it to universal conscience, representing God aright in a world where everything is opposed, and spite of a nature which is enmity against Him, and this in an earthen vessel as weak as the pressure of circumstances was great and varied and constant, so as to test the workman in every conceivable way.

Next we have a series of contrasts, not more paradoxical in appearance than strictly true. "Through glory and dishonour, through ill report and good report." Who among mankind ever touched the extremes of both as he who thus portrays the path of service according to God? Who over served the Lord Jesus so superior to

circumstances? Who less elated? Who farther from depression? Revered as a divine being and afterwards stoned, now suspected of murder and immediately after regarded as a god, he experienced vicissitudes only loss wild and rapid among the saints themselves, and among none more remarkably than at Corinth and in Galatia, where he had to vindicate even his apostleship among his own children in the faith, ready enough to bow down to arrogance and pretension.

Then by a simple transition we come to instances of ill or good report: “as deceivers and true, as unknown and well-known.” Never was it true of Paul, never can it be with a thoroughly devoted and unworldly servant of God, that all speak well of him. So did the Jews of old to the false prophets, not to the true. Faith loves not, but refuses, the chief place in feasts, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. The servant cleaves to His name whom the world know not, and so is unknown; yet as with the Master grace in service cannot but make itself felt in a world of need and misery — it cannot be hid.

The clauses which follow have a rather distinct character, sliding from matters of report into actual fact: “as dying and behold we live, as chastened and not put to death, as grieved but always rejoicing, as poor but enriching many, as having nothing and possessing all things.” If the Lord alone, when challenged as to who He was, could say of Himself as man here below, Absolutely that which I also say to you, the Truth in word and in deed, in everything and in every way; Paul inspired of God could speak with so much the more freedom as his heart entered into the spirit of seeing God according to Christ with largeness and with humility, with tenderness

and with courage, with unwearied patience and unflagging energy, with a purity and a love, with a jealousy for Christ's glory and an exercised conscience before God, never seen so combined in another. Out of all this he exhorts, feeling all acutely yet moved by nothing, and making no account of life itself, that he might finish his course with joy and the ministry which he had received of the Lord Jesus, not only testifying the gospel both to Jews and Greeks, and preaching the kingdom of God, but also announcing to the saints all the counsel of God. What suffering did it not involve! What faith and perseverance under discipline and sorrow! Yea, surely, joy in the Holy Ghost was there if in any, and triumph by grace over all seeming disadvantages. He knew, if any servant did, the force of the Lord's word in Mark 10:29-31, as poor but enriching many, as having nothing but possessing all things.

Having closed the blessed sketch of christian service from its source and power to its moral characteristics and effects, the apostle now turns to the saints with the expression of unhindered affection. There had been a barrier to that expression in their state; but God had wrought in grace, and they had in a great measure judged themselves, and faith working by love looked for all that is worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. Hence he could say "Our mouth is open unto you, Corinthians, our heart is expanded: ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels; now for the same requital be expanded also yourselves." (Vers. 11-18.)

Love was no longer driven back, for God was at work; and joy and thankfulness open the lips, as sorrow isolates where sympathy fails. So he can and does speak freely. "Our mouth is open unto you, Corinthians." He

similarly names the Galatians (Gal. 3:1), and the Philippians (Phil. 4:15); but each with a characteristic difference. The Galatians he blames severely, as senseless and bewitched, for turning aside from faith and the Spirit to law and flesh. To the Philippians he mentions that they alone had the privilege of communicating with him at the beginning of the gospel as now when the apostle was drawing near his close. The personal address to the Corinthians lies between those two. He could not accord to them that token of confidence in their spiritual simplicity and unworldliness which the Philippians had enjoyed first and last; whilst he is pouring out the fulness of his heart on the restored condition of the Corinthians instead of the stern censure on the Galatians. “Our heart is expanded,” he says. There can be no doubt that this is the word and sense intended. But it is an instructive fact that the two oldest and best uncials unite in a positive and evident error. The Vatican and the Sinaitic uncials give your, not “our.” Such facts should correct the exaggerated confidence of some in a few very ancient copies. The context has its grave importance where the external authorities differ. Here there can be no doubt that the mass of other and later authorities is right. The argument requires “our” imperatively, if ever so many voices had pronounced differently.

There was no narrowness in the apostle. His heart was ever large; and now he could show them so. It was in their own affections the Corinthians were contracted. (Ver. 12.) There was free and full room in his heart for them, but not in theirs for him. They had been lax, and he is about to warn them solemnly on this head; they were still narrow. How great an error to count

narrowness fidelity, whereas it may well go as here with laxity! In the apostle we see large-heartedness with real holiness; and they too go together. But the apostle counts yet more on grace, and as he had declared how his heart was expanded, instead of being shut up, he adds, “and for the same requital71 (or, for requital in the same), I speak as to children, be expanded also yourselves.” (Ver. 13.) Love never fails; and that their affections should answer his was the only recompense he sought at their hands.

The Corinthians were not only straitened in their affections. They were lax in their associations. Had Christ been the object, the new life had not been hindered in either way; for as He creates, directs, and sustains the affections according to God, so does He guide and guard the feet in the narrow way, His own path outside and above the world. Where He is not before the heart, the world in one form or another fails not to ensnare, fair excuses which cover unholy alliances escape detection, and His honour somehow is ere long compromised.

The apostle’s jealousy was alive to this danger in a love that bound together Christ and the church. Love speaks and acts freely, though with tender consideration. The apostle comprehends in his wide warning not only idolatry, but every kind of worldly association as defiling and unworthy of the Christian, because it suits not Christ nor the presence of God. If blessed with Christ for eternity, you cannot without sin have relations with the enemy in time.

Some have narrowed, if not perverted, the passage, by restricting it to an exhortation against the marriage of a

believer with an unbeliever. But while the principle undoubtedly condemns the contracting of any such union, it is clear on the face of it that, strictly speaking, this cannot be the direct intent; for the corrective insisted on is exactly what one ought not to follow, even in so sad a case. Thus a Christian woman who had sinned in marrying a worldly man ought not to come out or be separate from her husband; and she might expect the strongest censure from God and His children, not promised blessing, were she to act thus rashly, whatever the purity of her motives. In fact, 1 Corinthians 7 is the true and direct weapon for the question of marriage; our passage has a far larger bearing. It is the prohibition of every evil connection for a Christian, and it calls for thorough clearance from all; and no wonder, since the Christian has Christ for his life, righteousness, and hope, even now by the Spirit able to behold His glory without veil. It is incongruous, it is treason, if one has taken Christ's yoke, to accept also that of the world which rejected and crucified Him.

"Be not diversely yoked72 with unbelievers; for what partnership [is there] for righteousness and lawlessness? or what fellowship [hath] light with darkness? and what consent of Christ with Beliar73? or what part for a believer with an unbeliever? and what agreement for God's temple with idols? for ye are74 [the] living God's temple, even as God said, I will dwell and walk among them, and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Vers. 14-16.)

The figure with which the paragraph opens is obviously taken from the law which forbade yoking together heterogeneous animals, as the ox and the ass in ploughing. (Deut. 22:10.) It is not now the Jew severed

from the Gentile, but the Christian separate from the world in every shape and degree. Principles, motives, interests, ways, are not only different but opposed; what common ground is possible? But this is not all. Faith is the life-breath of the Christian, and his only avowed power the Holy Ghost, whom the world cannot receive as neither seeing nor knowing Him; and He works to reduce every thought to the obedience of Christ in absolute judgment of the world and its prince.

In detail what can be stronger than the clenching blows of every clause? First the apostle points to the radical difference of principles, low or high, righteousness and lawlessness, light and darkness. Next he points to their characteristic heads, Christ and Belial. Then he contrasts the partisans or followers, believers and unbelievers. Lastly he closes with their joint place as God's temple, contrasted with idols. Thus all that forms the life outward and inward is embraced so as to exclude alliance with the world and claim the saints wholly for Christ apart from the world. This in no way bars doing good to all, or especially seeking the salvation of any. On the contrary, the truer the separateness to Christ, the more forcibly can grace be preached to the world as a lost thing, and Christ the only Saviour. For righteousness was ever looked for in a saint; light, now that Christ was revealed, is characteristic of a Christian.

It is not here said that the body of the saint is the temple of God, as we see in 1 Corinthians 6, but that the saints are His temple; and it is added that accordingly God said, I will dwell among them and will walk among [them], and will be their God, and they shall be my people: an Old Testament promise and privilege (Ex. 29;

Lev. 26; Ezek. 37:7), but better enjoyed now, when His presence is given, not in a merely sensible sign as then, but in the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven since Pentecost. Redemption in figure or in reality, as often observed. laid the ground for God's dwelling thus.

With this great privilege is ever bound up the imperative obligation of separation to God from all evil. Holiness becomes, and must be in, the dwelling-place of God. No doubt the heathen then as ever are characterised by all sorts of corruption morally: but it is not from heathenism only but from every evil that God calls out the believer and insists on habitual avoidance and judgment of it.

"Wherefore come out from the midst of them and be separated, saith [the] Lord, and touch not an unclean thing; and I will receive you and will be to you for Father, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters, saith [the] Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us purify ourselves from every pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in God's fear." (Vers. 17, 18; 2 Cor. 7: l.)

If privilege abide and be deepened since redemption, more obviously moral truth is seen with increasing clearness and force. The conscience is purged by blood, the heart by faith. God must have His own holy, for He is holy; and this not only in an inward way, without which all would be hypocrisy, but in outward ways also to His own glory, unless He would be a partner with us to His own dishonour. He will have us clear from associations which are worldly and defiling; He will exercise our souls in order to freedom from all that denies or despises His will. He would not force others, nay He

refuses not things only but persons also that are of the world; He commands those that believe to come out from those that believe not, and to be separated. Indeed the union of the two is so monstrous that it never could be defended for a moment by a true heart; it is only when selfish interests or strong prejudices work that men gradually accustom and harden themselves to disobedience so flagrant and in every way disastrous. For as the man of the world cannot rise to the level of Christ to be together with His own, the Christian must descend to the level of fallen Adam and the world. God is thus and ever more and more put to shame in what claims to be His house, with a loudness proportioned to its departure from His word.

Here again the Holy Spirit led the apostle to borrow words from various parts of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah 52:11, Ezekiel 20:34, 2 Samuel 7:8, 14, Isaiah 43:6. Apostolic gift only enforced divine authority, and expressed itself in terms drawn freely from various parts of scripture. Nor could any other way have been chosen so wise or pertinent if the aim was to show the will of God and His promises. It is here to encourage individual submission to His word, as before for the enjoyment of His presence in common. There they were His temple in virtue of His dwelling and walking about among them; here He says, “I will receive you and will be to you for Father, and ye shall be to me for sons and daughters.” It is our new relationship in positive blessing and supposes the divine nature given to us.

But there is another thing of much moment as well as interest to observe. Jehovah as such is introduced under the Septuagintal form of “Lord” (κύριος) and so without the article; and still more “Lord Almighty.” That is, in

Old Testament form Jehovah Shaddai now brings out His New Testament relationship to those who in the obedience of faith come out from among the men of the world to be His sons and daughters. For these are the great relations into which God Elohim enters, as revealing Himself, first to the fathers as Almighty (Gen. 17:1, Gen. 27:8, Gen. 35:11, Gen. 48:3), then as Jehovah to the children of Israel (Ex. 6:3, etc.), lastly as Father, which was reserved for the Son to declare, not only out of the fulness of enjoyment and in testimony, but bringing us into it in virtue of His death and resurrection (John 20:17, etc.) And to our souls what more instructive than the fact everywhere patent, that those saints who cling to the world, which is enmity against God and involves in what is unclean at every turn, never seem to rise into the liberty of God's sons, especially in their public worship, but habitually drop into language more befitting the days when God was dealing with a nation and dwelt in the thick darkness, instead of being revealed as He now is in and by His Son, according to His true nature and that relationship which is so sweet to the believer as led by the Holy Ghost, the relationship proper to us now, though of course He be evermore Jehovah Shaddai?

Clearly too the possession of these promises is the great incentive to personal purification in practice. Nor is anything more hateful than the position of separateness from the world along with indifference to holiness. There are those who inculcate what is personal only and apologise for ecclesiastical evil as if it did not compromise them in the Lord's dishonour; there are others whose zeal is solely for ecclesiastical purity and whose personal ways are light and loose and far below

those of many a saint in humanly formed and ordered societies. Both classes are condemned by the solemn words before us: the first by 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, the second by 2 Corinthians 7:1. May we, as having proved the truth and blessing of the former, have grace to find the constant value of the latter also, and to cultivate purity outward and inward, perfecting holiness in God's fear! We have thus a double relationship in His grace. God dwells and walks in us as His temple, plainly a collective blessing; and besides, He is to us for Father, as we are to Him for sons and daughters, which is no less surely individual. But both are founded on coming out in separateness to God from among the worldly, with responsibility to touch no unclean thing. The apologist for ecclesiastical antinomianism argues that the apostle is actually speaking of heathen impurity. Granted: it was the unclean thing there and then; but he was led by the Spirit to write with such breadth and depth as to cover everything that defiles. Is it meant that uncleanness is now consecrated or ignored? Is it denied that evil is most of all evil when coupled with the name of the Lord Jesus? Is not such an association the deceit, power, and triumph of the wicked one? To cleanse ourselves from every pollution is our clear and habitual duty as God's temple and family.

2 Corinthians 7

The apostle returns to the expression of his affection towards the Corinthians, as he desired their love.

"Receive us: we wronged none, we corrupted none, we overreached none. For condemnation I do not speak; for I have said before that ye are in our hearts to die with and to live with. Great [is] my frankness toward you,

great my boasting in respect of you: I am filled with encouragement, I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction. For also when we came into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but [we were] afflicted in every way; without fightings, within fears. But he that encourageth the lowly, God, encouraged us by the coming of Titus, and not by his coming only but also by the encouragement with which he was encouraged in your case, declaring to us your longing desire, your mourning, your zeal for me, so that I the more rejoiceth. Because if also I grieved you in the letter, I do not regret, if also I did regret;75 for I see that that letter if also for a time grieved you. Now I rejoice, not that ye were grieved but that ye were grieved unto repentance, for ye were grieved according to God that in nothing ye might suffer damage from us. For grief according to God worketh76 repentance to salvation not to be regretted; but the grief of the world worketh out death. For, behold, this very thing that ye were grieved according to God, how much diligence it wrought out in you, nay self-clearing, nay indignation, nay fear, nay longing desire, nay zeal, nay avenging! In everything did ye prove yourselves to be pure in the matter. Wherefore, if also I wrote, [it was] not for the sake of him that wronged, nor for his sake that was wronged, but for the sake of your diligence for us (or, ours for you)77 being manifested unto you before God. On this account we have been encouraged; but78 in our comfort we rejoiced the more exceedingly over the joy of Titus, because his spirit hath been refreshed by you all. Because if I have boasted to him anything of you, I was not put to shame; but as we speak all things to you in truth, so also our boasting of you to Titus was truth. And his affections are more exceedingly toward you, calling to mind the obedience of

you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoice79 that in everything I am confident in you." (Vers. 2-16.)

Thus does he call for room in their hearts: a touching appeal when we reflect who and what he was, who and what they were. The lack of love was certainly not in him; nor was lowliness absent from him who deigns to repudiate the unworthy insinuations whispered against him, which they had better see whether they might not be more applicable elsewhere: neither injustice nor corruption nor fraudulent gain were true of him. He was careful to exclude even the appearance of these evils. But if the Holy Spirit work in the saints, Satan is ever busy and knows how to avail himself of all circumstances to detract and undermine, especially where love should most abound. In speaking thus however the apostle is careful to guard his words from the semblance of a condemnatory spirit. As he had already implied in 2 Corinthians 6:11, they were in his heart to die with and to live with. He that is familiar with the Latin lyric may remember the well-known line which resembles this sentiment in form — how different in reality! "Tecum vivere amem, tecum obeam libens." And how infinitely superior, in strength as in purity, is this outpouring of unselfish affection, where the Christian begins with dying together, whilst the heathen can but end with it!

Far from a word to wound their spirits now restored, he can and does speak freely and in the strongest confidence. "Great [is] my frankness toward you, great my boasting in respect of you: I am filled with encouragement, I am overflowing with joy in all our afflictions." Sorrow closes the heart, joy opens it; and

now the apostle's gladness of heart was proportionate to the depth of his pain over saints so dear in the Lord. "For also when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted in every way: without fightings, within fears. But he that encourageth the lowly, God, encouraged us by the coming of Titus, and not by his coming only but also by the encouragement with which he was encouraged in your case, declaring to us your longing desire, your mourning, your zeal for me. so that I the more rejoiced." It was not only in Troas he was full of heaviness and anxiety, but also in Macedonia whither he had gone in the hope of hearing the latest tidings from Titus. There he had yet more pressure of trouble till the good news came. Deeply interesting and affecting it is to hear the apostle opening his heart thus freely and to know how distracted and burdened he had been by all... "Our flesh" (ver. 5) is a peculiar expression, signifying (I suppose) his human weakness as such; "afflicted in every way" describes the circumstances ("without fightings, within fears") inward and outward. But God does not fail. He is the encourager of the depressed as He resists the proud; and He it was who now appeared to cheer the distressed apostle by the coming of Titus, above all by the tidings of what grace had wrought in the Corinthians, restoration in affection, and, as we shall see later, in conscience too.

The reason or explanation of his former severity, given in the verses that follow, is highly interesting and important in various respects. It is not "a" but the letter, clearly referring to the first epistle to the Corinthians. Did our translators wish to conceal this? It is not the only instance here of want of faith in men of God; for

Calvin also shirks the truth, when he contends that μετεμελόμην "I repented" is used in the passage improperly for being grieved. For (argues he) when Paul made the Corinthians sad, he himself also shared in the grief and in a certain way inflicted sadness on himself at the same time. It is therefore just as if he said, Though I unwillingly pained you, it grieved me too that I was forced to be harsh to you; now I cease to grieve on this account whilst I see it has been useful to you. Otherwise if we own that Paul was concerned at what he had written, Calvin thought it would involve the grave absurdity that the former epistle was written under inconsiderate impulse rather than by the direction of the Spirit.80 So Erasmus considered that the supposition was not the face.81 But there is not the smallest need for toning down or altering the language. It is indeed, however common, an erroneous view of inspiration, which does in no way preclude the working of motive as we see in Luke 1:1-3, any more than deep exercise of mind as here. We are bound to accept the plain words of the apostle, which show his anxiety after he had written an unquestionably inspired epistle. "Because if also I grieved you in the letter I do not regret, if also I did regret; for I see that that letter if also for an hour grieved you. Now I rejoice not that ye were grieved but that ye were grieved unto repentance; for ye were grieved according to God that ye might in nothing suffer loss from us." He recognised the indubitable fruit of the Holy Spirit's operation through the very epistle which had harassed his spirit after he had written and sent it off. He had no question more. It was of God, as he was divinely convinced and reassured; but now in his joy at their restoration he could tell them all his feelings freely, even a passing regret for having written the first epistle,

truly inspired of God as it was, though joy abounded the more now for the blessing that had resulted.

It is a mistake to call even an inspired man infallible: none but Christ was, and He was pleased to write neither Gospels nor Epistles, without overlooking of course what He commanded His servants to write in the great and final book of the Canon. But the Spirit of God guided and kept the vessels of His inspiration, so that, maintaining the individuality of each writer, He should give a result perfectly according to God. In the first Epistle the apostle distinguishes between the fruit of his spiritual judgment and the positive commandments of the Lord; but he was inspired to give us both in 2 Corinthians 7. Here he is inspired to tell us how his spirit was agitated even about that inspired epistle, in no way as to its absolute truth, but through his anxiety lest the very desire to win his beloved children back might not have estranged them for ever.

Further, we have precious light from God here as to that great work in the awakened soul, repentance. it is quite distinct from regret or change of mind. Even sorrow however deep is not repentance, though sorrow according to God works it out. Again, it is not correct to confound repentance with conversion to God, which is surely a turning from sin with earnest desire for holiness. Repentance is the soul as born of God sitting in judgment on the old man and its acts, its words and its ways. And as repentance for remission of sins was to be preached in Christ’s name, so He was exalted to give both. It is not a changed mind however great about God in Christ, which is rather what faith is and gives; it is the renewed mind taking account of the man and his course according to God’s word and nature. Hence it is said to

be not about God, but “toward God” or Godward; for the conscience then takes His side in self-judgment before Him, and all is weighed as in His sight. It is of course of the Spirit, not intellectual but moral. “Surely after that I was turned, I repented.” It follows conversion and consequently that application of the word which arrests the soul by faith, though it be not yet the faith of the word of truth, the gospel of salvation, which brings into peace.

Here of course it is the repentance of saints who had sinned. But it is the same principle, and in contrast with the world’s grief which, knowing not God, gives itself up to despair and works out death. However overwhelmed may be the believer, God takes care that there shall be enough hope in His mercy to guard from the despairing fear which Satan wields for his deadly purposes.

And what a picture the apostle draws of God’s recent work in the repentant Corinthians! “For behold this very thing, that ye were grieved according to God how much diligence it wrought out in you, nay self-clearing, nay indignation, nay fear, nay longing desire, nay zeal, nay avenging! In everything did ye prove yourselves to be pure in the matter.” (Ver. 11) Of course its precise character was modified by the generally bad state of the assembly before grace thus used the first epistle. No indifference now, but earnest care; no extenuation of the evil, but thorough cleansing of themselves; a burning sense of indignation, fear, longing desire, zeal, and revenge, all had their place; so that he who had sternly reproved them could say that they had proved themselves clear in the matter: a, if not the, grand aim of the Spirit in discipline, and not merely getting rid of the offender.

Sometimes in a case of disciplinary truth, it is a question as at Corinth of the assembly's state as a whole. Before the first Epistle they were wholly ignorant that all were involved in the evil which was before their eyes, and which they did not know they were bound to judge. When we read that they were puffed up and had not rather mourned, we must bear in mind that they were quite inexperienced, and that the mind of the Lord as to dealing with wickedness in the assembly or its members, had not yet been revealed to them. Still as saints they ought to have felt the sin and scandal deeply, and if they did not know how to act, they should have betaken themselves to mourning in order that he that had done this deed should be taken away out of the midst of them. Spiritual instinct should have felt thus and laid it with shame and earnest desire before the Lord who never fails. But that epistle was blessed of God, in dealing with their souls, not only as to the offender, but, as to their own state, and thus gave occasion for the apostle to open his heart so painfully burdened, and sorely agitated with all the fervour of a real love which only overleaps its old channel because of the temporary repression.

Where souls since then, in the face of these epistles, have tampered with grave evil whatever it be, where palliation has been at work, where ingenious excuses have blunted the sense of right and wrong, as may be at any time among Christians, it is a state of things worse in some respects than that at Corinth. For there ignorance of the duty of the assembly in discipline prevailed, and we cannot wonder at it, though the sin was appalling. The mere getting the wicked person outside, important as it may be, is not what comforted

the apostle's heart, but the working of deep and united moral feelings all round. "In everything ye have proved yourselves to be pure in the matter." Where there had been such indifference to their complicity, even though in ignorance of their responsibility as at Corinth, the saints had to clear themselves and prove it for the Lord's vindication. But it is, I doubt not, a general principle, and always incumbent. Merely to have done with the offender would show in others an unexercised conscience, or but judicial hardness. The happy contrast with all this was here manifest. They had indeed been grieved according to God.

Hence the apostle adds that, if also he wrote to them, it was not for the sake of the wrong-doer nor of the one wronged, but for the manifestation to them before God of their diligent zeal for them or of the apostle's for them. (Ver. 12.) It seems passing strange that the early clauses should seem obscure; as to the latter in opposite ways the copies singularly differ, some as the Sinaitic and the Boernerian yielding no good sense. Whatever the adversary had wrought for a while, their true zeal for the apostle was made plain to themselves at last before God. This is the best supported sense.

"On this account we have been encouraged; and in [or in addition to] our encouragement, we rejoiced much more abundantly at the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all." Grace had given the happiest issue to that which fleshly energy or ease had ruined for a time. And joy abounded not in them only but more in Titus, most in Paul himself. And there were other grounds beyond, though connected with, their present state. "Because if I have boasted anything to him over you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things

to you in truth, so also the boasting about you before Titus was truth; and more abundantly toward you are his bowels, while calling to mind the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling ye received him. I rejoice that in everything I have good courage in respect of you." Such an allusion to his feelings towards the Corinthians, when they must have been conscious of their temporary alienation, and deplorably low state, would more than ever seal their affection, as it proved his to have been true from first to last. His heart was not inconstant, nor was his tongue insincere. He loved, if also he had blamed his beloved children at Corinth, and they could now appreciate all better, as he could tell out all freely, however delicately. How blessed it is when grace thus reigns through righteousness, as it perfectly did by Christ unto eternal life!

2 Corinthians 8.

The apostle was now free, so far as the state of the Corinthian saints was concerned, to introduce the great duty of remembering the poor. Even the most honoured servants of the Lord were forward in this work, and not least Paul himself. This he would lay on the heart of the Corinthians. As he sought not his own things, he could plead for others; and he would draw out the affections of his children at Corinth toward saints suffering from poverty in Judea, whither he was going.

Yet we may notice how the character of the man comes out. He did not like the task of appealing to others for pecuniary help even though for others. The directness of his language in the first epistle is therefore in the strongest contrast with his circumlocution in the second. The need was deeply on his own heart; and he has no

more doubt of the generous feelings of the Corinthians than of their ability, so far as circumstances were concerned, to respond; but the delicacy with which he deals with all is most marked and instructive. Personal influence has no place; faith and love are called out actively; the cheering example of saints where such devotedness could have been least expected opens the way; and Christ is brought in, carrying it home with irresistible power for those that knew Him.

“Now we make known to you, brethren, the grace of God that is given in [or, among] the assemblies of Macedonia; that in much trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches82 of their liberality; because according to power [I bear witness] and beyond83 power [they gave] of their. own accord, beseeching of us with much entreaty84 the grace and the fellowship of the ministering unto the saints; and this not as we hoped, but their own selves they gave first to the Lord and to us by the will of God; so that we exhorted Titus, that, even as he before began, so he would also complete as to you this grace also; but as ye abound in everything, faith and word and knowledge and all diligence and love from you85 to us, that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but through “the diligence of others proving the genuineness of your love also.” (Vers. 1-8.)

|| D E read

διὰ τὴν etc., that is, on account of. Elzevir differs from Stephens in falsely reading ἡμετέρας “our,” with a few cursives, instead of ὑμ. “your.”

How blessedly the grace of God” changes everything it takes up And what can it not reach in its comprehensive embrace? Where is the demand too hard for it to entertain? Or the evil too deep for it to fathom? What sin is beyond forgiveness? Whose misery or of what sort can it not turn into an occasion for the all-overcoming goodness of God? See here how that which is among men but “filthy lucre,” an especial object of the covetousness which is idolatry, becomes the means of exercising faith in love, to the glory of God and the exceeding blessing of His children, while it draws out the wisdom of the Holy Ghost through the apostle, who did not deem it beneath the fullest consideration in all its details.

First, the mighty influence of example is brought to bear on the saints in Corinth. (Ver. l.) Nor is this surprising; for are they not one family with its common interests, yea, one body with its fellowship undivided and immediate? Granted that the wants are in carnal things; granted, that it is no question of pleading rights or claims. But a relationship in the Spirit is no less real and far more momentous than one in the flesh; and, if there be suffering, love feels accordingly. In the next place God took care that the first to respond should be saints not in the wealthy city of Corinth, but in the long desolated and impoverished district of Macedonia, that the work might be of God’s grace, and in no way a matter of worldly circumstances. Even in writing to the Corinthians the apostle had reminded them, as all experience shows, that the confessors of Christ are for the most part from the poor and obscure and foolish: and we know that in the Macedonian assemblies at this time the saints were no exception to the generally

distressed condition of the country. On the contrary, we are expressly told here of their poverty down into the depths. They gave no gifts of superfluity; it was faith working by love, whilst they were proving themselves a great trial of affliction. The circumstances of Macedonia might have seemed eminently unfavourable; the reality of their liberality was the more evidently from a divine source; for in the face of tribulation their joy abounded, and their deep poverty, instead of appealing for aid to others, abounded unto the riches of their open-hearted generosity. (Ver. 2.) It was unselfish devotedness, loving others better than themselves; and as God gave them the grace that so wrought, so the apostle names it in love to the saints in Corinth, and, indeed we may say, to us all, that our hearts too should go forth in no less love. For love is as energetic and fruitful, as it is holy and free; and God would have not a grain of the good seed lost.

Nor does love calculate what it can spare nor what it can effect. (Ver. 3.) The heart animated by love thinks not of its own trials or deep poverty, but of those it hears to be suffering in any special degree, and acts at once. At least the apostle testifies of the Macedonian saints, that according to means, and beyond means, they gave of their own accord. No earthly incentives were here; no pressure of agents, no rivalry of donations, no moving appeals among multitudes, no circulated lists to shame or to stimulate, no personal or party aims of any kind. It is the grace of God given from first to last; and as God treasures it, so His servant testifies of it so much the more because those in whom it wrought thought nothing of it in the love that felt only the need of its objects.

But this is not all: the Macedonian saints, far from being solicited.. were themselves the suitors of Paul and his companions, and with much entreaty begged of them the grace and the fellowship of the ministering unto the saints, that is, to be allowed a share in the grace or favour of thus caring for the suffering saints of Judea.

It will be noticed that the Authorised Version, following the common Greek text, contains the words, “that we would receive” (δέξασθαι ἡμᾶς), which again involves the insertion of “take upon its” in verse 4. But as the former is not warranted by the best authorities, so the latter is needless and indeed worse; for both additions enfeeble and falsify the sense, which is, that the Macedonian saints might have the grace and fellowship of the service which was to be done the poor saints, not the mere idea that the apostle would receive their collection and undertake its distribution.86 But the apostle goes farther in his fine sketch of Macedonian devotedness; for it was not only spontaneous, but beyond all expectation of himself, accustomed as he was to live in the walk of faith every day. “And this not as we hoped, but their own selves they gave first to the Lord and to us by the will of God.” Is not this the reflection, yea reproduction, as far as it goes, of Christ’s love in giving Himself? Doubtless directly and necessarily there is a perfection in Christ’s offering which is altogether unique. He gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour; it was all this and more to God and for us, as nothing else could be. But these humble and loving saints, the grace of God in whom is commended to the Corinthians, did not merely go beyond their means, but beyond the apostle’s hope, who did not wish to be burdened with the wants of

others those who were themselves in the depth of poverty. And no wonder that they thus exceeded, seeing that, as he adds, “their own selves they gave first to the Lord, and to us by the will of God.” Had they not caught a vivid impression of the Saviour’s love, where God always had the first place, whatever His infinite compassion for man? When love for the saints follows in their case, it is qualified by that which was the constant motive of Christ, “by the will of God.” It is not only consistency with His will, though this of course was true, but His will was the spring of the self-sacrifice.

This acted on the heart of the apostle up to the point of beseeching Titus to carry out what he had formerly begun among the Corinthians when he delivered the first epistle. (Ver. 6.) Paul’s love for them was holily jealous that their love should not slacken and that an early promise should not wither in the bud. And Titus was the meet instrument, as he before began, so also now to complete as to87 the Corinthians this grace also.

“But, as ye abound in everything, faith and word and knowledge and all diligence and love from you to us, that ye abound in this grace also.” The apostle exhorts the Corinthians too, as he had Titus. They had their part now, and as God had enriched with everything else, were they to fail in this grace? Nay, He looks that they should abound in it also. (Ver. 7.) Yet he is careful that it should not be by injunction but of grace. “I speak not by command, but through the diligence of others proving the genuineness of your love also.” (Ver. 8.) What a blending of tenderness, delicacy, and of faithfulness withal!

We have seen how powerfully the thought of the Lord acted on the saints of Macedonia, who in spite of their deep poverty had so exceeded the apostle's expectation. Now he brings His grace to bear on those of Achaia whom he had ground to believe awakened to feel accordingly.

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes he being rich became poor, in order that ye by his poverty might become rich. And I give an opinion in this, for this is profitable for you who began before not only the doing, but also to be willing a year ago. But now also complete the doing, that even as the readiness of the willing [was there], so also the completing [may be] out of what ye have. For if the readiness be there, [one is] accepted according to what he may have, not according to what he hath not. For [it is] not that others [should have] ease and you distress, but on equality: at the present time your abundance for their lack, that their abundance also should be for your lack, so that there should be equality; as it is written, He that [gathered] much had nothing over, and he that [gathered] little had no lack." (Vers. 9-15.)

The parenthesis of verse 9 is eminently instructive, not only for that which would act powerfully on the Corinthians as on all saints who appreciate the grace of our Lord, but as a sample of the way the Spirit of God turns what was in Christ to every exigency of the individual or of the church. Nor does any other motive act with equal power in holiness. And it could not be otherwise; for who or what can compare with Christ? To His grace, though it be really immeasurable, two measures are applied, the infinite glory of His person in itself, and the depth of humiliation to which He

submitted for us. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that for your sakes he being rich became poor, in order that ye by his poverty might be made rich.” Wealth consists in fulness of means and resources, and poverty in their utter lack. As a divine person our Lord had no need for Himself, and all things at command for others absolutely. He was rich indeed, yet for our sakes became poor, not in the letter only but in spirit to the uttermost. See the picture summed up in Philippians 2, and expanded or detailed in all the Gospels, the perfect pattern of One who hung in dependence on His Father and never used a single thing for Himself throughout His career. He waited on and lived on account of the Father; it was His meat to do His will and finish His work. He had no motive but the one of pleasing His Father, whatever the cost. The fast of forty days in the wilderness was doubtless a special scene of trial which ushered in His public ministry; but it was His ordinary life to count on the care of God while doing His work without an anxiety on the one hand, and on the other without independent resources. But His poverty went down into depths unfathomable in the cross when giving His life for the sheep. I do not speak merely of His garments parted among them and of their casting lots upon His vesture, image though it was of extreme and helpless destitution. Deeper elements were there than man’s eye saw, when all forsook Him and fled. God forsook Him too — His God. What remained then? Nothing but the unsparing judgment of our sins. Was He not the “poor man” then as none other was, never morally so high, yet never so abject, and this not circumstantially alone but in all the unspeakable abandonment of that hour? As He said prophetically in Psalm 22, “I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men

and despised of the people..... I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death."

But He was heard from the horns of the unicorns, and in resurrection declares His Father's name unto His brethren, in the midst of the congregation praising Him. What tongue of men or of angels can adequately tell the change? None but His own when He passed from the abyss of woe where was no standing to the everlasting and immutable ground of divine righteousness where the once guilty objects of grace are set in Him without spot or stain or charge before God, who delights to show them His estimate of Christ's redemption, and gives the Holy Spirit to seal them unto the day which will declare it. Yet is this but part of the riches of grace wherewith Christ now enriches us who believe. And the blessing of Jehovah is not only for us an exhaustless treasure, but it will go forth with wide-embracing fulness when Messiah's praise shall be "in the great congregation." Then all the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto Jehovah; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before Him. For as surely as the Father will surround the Son with His children in His house in heaven, the kingdom is Jehovah's, and He is the Governor among the nations, and the earth is to be blessed in that day no less than the heavens be filled with the rich harvest gathered into the granary on high, when for the dispensation of the fulness of times He will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him, in

whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Truly we by His poverty have been enriched, though not we alone but every soul who ever has been, and ever shall be, blessed. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship; all they that go down to the dust shall bow before Him; and none can keep alive his own soul. Such is the grace, the known grace, of our Lord Jesus Christ, and these the ways of our God, not now only but in the ages to come for His own glory and to His praise, whose humiliation and redemption have wrought such wonders, as yet only seen by faith, soon to be displayed before every eye. How sweet to associate it with the gracious consideration of the poor saints and the supply of their need at Jerusalem! How worthy of God thus to bring Christ into that which otherwise had been but an exercise of benevolence and compassion!

The apostle adds his judgment of its profit for the Corinthian saints themselves (ver. 10), who began before not only the doing, but also the willing a year ago. He could therefore with the more delicate propriety urge the completing of their purpose out of what they had. Grace repudiates constraint, but values, encourages, and directs readiness of mind: without this, what is the worth of giving? Is the gift acceptable? or the giver? But if the readiness be there, one is accepted according to what one has, not according to what one has not. Sentiment disappears; reality takes its place. Truth accompanies grace; and equity follows. For it is not that others should have ease and the Corinthians pressure, but on equality; and, as the application is made, “at the present time your abundance for their lack, that their

abundance area should be for your lack." This is fortified by God's way and word as to the gathering of the manna of old; when God adjusted the supply to the demand with a wisdom and power which precluded superfluity no less than deficiency. He that gave the manna from heaven measured it exactly, whatever the differing measures in man's hands. And we have to do with the same God, who regulates all in the assembly with assuredly no less care and love.

In the rest of the chapter the apostle dwells on the care taken that the administration of the bounty should be not only beyond suspicion, but clothed with dignity and godly confidence by the known character of those entrusted with it. For it is not enough that the end should be divine, but that the means also should approve themselves to every true conscience. If lucre be apt to be filthy, if covetousness be idolatry, if the love of money be a root of all evil, the Spirit of God knows how to bring in Christ into every detail, and to turn both way and end into blessing to God's glory.

"But thanks to God that giveth the same zeal for you in the heart of Titus, in that he received indeed the exhortation, but being very zealous of his own accord he set out unto you. But we sent together with him the brother whose praise in the gospel [is] through all the assemblies, and not only [so] but also chosen by the assemblies our fellow-traveller with this grace that is being administered by us unto the glory of the Lord [himself]88 and our89 readiness; guarding against this, that none should blame us in this abundance that is being administered by us, for we provide90 things honourable not only before [the] Lord but also before men. And we have sent with them our brother whom we

proved to be zealous many times in many things, but now much more zealous by great confidence that [he hath] in you. Whether as regards Titus, [he is] my partner and fellow-labourer toward you; whether our brethren, [they are] messengers of assemblies, Christ's glory. The showing forth then of your love and of our boasting for you show forth91 unto them92 in the face of the assemblies." (Vers. 16-24.)

The apostle thankfully owned the grace of God in giving Titus to feel as he zealously felt himself about the Corinthian saints in the matter, so that while he met the desire, yet too zealous as he was to require it he was ready to set out of his own accord unto them. He speaks as if it were already done; because in the style adopted in letters the facts would be made good when Titus had reached Corinth with this epistle. How eminently suited to comfort as well as rouse to a holy zeal the saints themselves when such a servant of the Lord as Titus so promptly responded to the apostle's heart, confident as both were that, whatever appearances indicated to those who judged superficially, grace had wrought in them, really and would yet flow through them to God's glory abundantly! If Timothy was like-minded with him to care for the state of the Philippians with genuine feeling at a later day, the Corinthians might now learn no less, as they were already prepared to do, how Titus shared the zeal of the apostle in carrying out the proffered bounty of Corinth, which bad been so slow of execution as to compromise them.

Thoughtful too as ever that Christ's glory should be sustained in His servants, He would not expose Titus to unworthy, however unwarrantable, question; and so he associated with him in this service "the brother whose

praise in the gospel is throughout all the assemblies." So well known was he by this description to the Corinthians that no direct designation was needed, though men of other times have found it so vague as to afford grounds equally plausible for many, equally uncertain for any one in particular. Of one thing we may be assured that, whether or not Luke was intended, "whose praise in the gospel" has nothing to do with him in respect of the inspired account of our Lord which induced many of the ancients to appropriate the description to him, any more than to Mark. Barnabas and Silas have been conjectured; as also Aristarchus, Gaius, Trophimus, etc. But none of these guesses seems less happy than that of some speculative Germans, who have applied τὸν ἀδελφόν to a supposed brother (after the flesh) of Titus, not seeing the incongruity of such an one, if indeed he existed, for the work in hand. The object and character of the association would have been frustrated by selecting one so near to Titus. But we do know the further consideration that, whoever he may have been, he was chosen by the assemblies to travel with the apostle and the rest who were to carry the offering of love from the, Gentile saints to their poor brethren in Judea.

Here we see an important principle in exact accordance with the direction of the twelve in Acts 6. As the christian multitude gave the means, they were left free to choose the administrators. This was as wise as gracious. The apostles kept aloof from all appearance of favouritism, and adhered to their own work with prayer, the condition of power. They might solemnly establish the seven over their business of serving tables; but they called on the disciples in general to look out from among

themselves men of good report, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom in whom they had confidence. Such were the proceedings in the assembly of Jerusalem; and a like method was adopted among the Gentile assemblies, where many joined their contributions for the need at Jerusalem as we learn in verse 19. Where the saints gave, they chose according to their best judgment for the due application of their gifts, whether in one assembly, or for the special work of many assemblies. But in no case did they meddle with the ministers of the word. These the Lord gave, not the church; and the church, instead of choosing, received those whom the Lord chose and sent, not merely the higher ones, as apostles and prophets, but the more ordinary, as evangelists, pastors and teachers. For they too all rest on the same principle of the Lord's gift, and not man's. And hence it is an utter confusion to mix up two things so different as the Lord's sole title to give and send His servants in the word, and the assembly's title to choose those in whom the saints have confidence to administer their bounty.

The case before us falls under the latter. "The brother" un-named was chosen by the assemblies "our fellow-traveller with the grace that is being administered by us unto the glory of the Lord [Himself] and our readiness;" as indeed the apostle had directed in 1 Corinthians 16:3, 4. The moral reason of the caution follows: "guarding against this, that none should blame us in this abundance that is being administered by us, for we provide things honourable not only before [the] Lord but before men." (Vers. 20, 21.) It is not lack of faith, but rather faith working by love which would cut off

occasion from men, as well as walk with pure conscience before God. The allusion is to Proverbs 3:4 in the LXX.

The next verse, as well as that which follows, proves that the apostle added another brother. “And we sent with them [i.e. with Titus and the one already described] our brother whom we proved to be zealous many times in many things, but now much more zealous by great confidence that [he hath] in you.” (Ver. 22.) Still less is it possible for us to determine who is this second brother meant; because we have not even so many marks as attached to the first. But two particulars fitting him for the work are mentioned: the apostle’s experience of his proved zeal often and variedly; and again the exceeding warmth of his own zeal now by his (hardly Paul’s) great confidence in the Corinthian saints. For the margin of the Authorised Version is more correct than the text, at least in my judgment. None could be so unsuitable an associate as a near relation, if the aim were, as it was, to inspire confidence in the donors.

It seems to be clear from verse 23 that Titus stood relatively in the higher position of the three who were to accompany the apostle: “Whether as regards Titus, [he is] my partner and fellow-labourer toward you; whether our brethren, [they are] messengers of assemblies, Christ’s glory.” Is it not then incredible that the apostle would have thus classified or described men so eminent as Barnabas, Silas, Luke or Mark? Not to say that it was only at a later day that he expresses his re-assurance as to the last. Could he yet write that Mark was serviceable to him for ministry? or that he was among his fellow-workers for the kingdom of God who were such as had been a consolation to him? Renewed confidence may be gravely doubted then, though it came at length; and the

apostle was glad to say so as soon as he could to the Lord's praise.

It is well to note how the expression "messengers [ἀπόστολοι] of assemblies" illustrates the difference of a charge from men however delicate and weighty as compared with a gift or charge from the Lord like an apostle. These brethren, while beautifully and graciously styled "Christ's glory" as being active in the display of His excellency, were deputed envoys of certain churches who entrusted them with their contributions for Judea. Not only did he decline the sole administration of the gift himself, but he directed and sanctioned the choice of more than one and gave their task dignity in all eyes by associating the two brethren, not only with Titus who shared the highest confidence of the saints, but with himself. Our Authorised Version, however, is quite right in not rendering the word "apostles" (which is appropriated to the envoys of the Lord in the highest rank of His work) and in preferring "messengers" here and in Philippians 2:25, where it is said of Epaphroditus who was the bearer of what the Philippian saints sent at a later day of the apostle in Rome. To translate the passage in our text or in Philippians 2, "apostles" can only be from inconsiderateness, or still worse — the desire to level down the apostles of Christ by levelling up the messenger or messengers of churches. The source of the commission is the measure of their difference. To confound them is to degrade the Lord or to deify the church, the great effort of the enemy by those who know not the truth, however they may look in opposition to each other. For here it is that the highest and the lowest ecclesiastically meet: the one by exalting a merely human caste of church officials to the place

which the Lord gave His apostles; the other by reducing the apostles of the Lord to those chosen by the assemblies or delegates of the people. They both agree, one superstitiously, the other rationalistically, in unbelief of Christ's gracious power in providing for the perfecting of the saints.

Having thus summed up what he had to say of his companions, of moment for the Corinthian saints at this time, he calls on the saints to give the proof of their love and of his boasting about them to those brethren in the face of the assemblies.

50 γε CKLP and almost all cursives, and fathers;

περ B D E F G, 17, 80, etc.

51 ἐκδ. is the strange error of Dp.m. F G etc., contrary to all the set.

52 It is false and anti-scriptural that "without body there is no soul," that "the continuance of the soul as a pure spirit without a body is to the apostle an impossibility: the doctrine of the soul's immortality is like the term, strange to the Bible. And no wonder, a self-consciousness in a created being necessarily supposes the limit of a bodily organisation." This denies angel and spirit really, as well as what scripture teaches of the separated soul.

53 D E F G, etc., with many versions and fathers read

τούτῳ "this," contrary to B C K L P and the great majority.

54 ἐπειδή St. (not Elz.) with a few juniors.

55 D E F G etc.,

κατεργαζόμενος "worketh."

56 καί is added by some uncials and most cursives, contrary to the best authorities.

57 Thus he writes (Comm. in loco, ed. A, Tholuck, Halis Sax., i. 459), “Copula quae mox sequitur, resolvi debet in causalem particulam, hoc modo: Bono animo sumus quia scimus nos peregrinari a corpore, etc. Nam haec cognitio nostrae tranquillitatis et fiduciae causa est.”

58 The mass of authority and of the highest character omits εἰ “if,” which Text. Rec. has with corr. C, etc. Vulg., Cop. and Arm. and many fathers. it seems a mere slip to omit it, because of the εἴς following.

59 The Five Clergymen, like others, argue for “have been beside ourselves,” but while there is a propriety in the aorist as transient, our English idiom seems to require a present here, as in many other cases. The sobriety was continuous.

60 Chrysostom takes the Greek thus without hesitation, and he surely must have known his own tongue. Οὐκοῦν ὡς πάντων ἀπολομένων, φησίν. Οὐ γὰρ ἄν, εἰ μὴ πάντες ἀπέθανον, ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀπέθανεν. Hom. xi. in 2 Corinth. tom. iii. 127: ed. Field. Oxon. 1845.

61 Text. Rec. adds

δέ “but” with the majority, but not p.m. B D, etc. F G, etc., and in καὶ

εἰ, “and if;” as some also add

κατὰ σ. as to flesh” at the end of the verse.

62 Text. Rec. with most adds

τὰ πάντα before or after

κ., but not “B C Dp.m. F G nor most of the very ancient versions.

63 Text. Rec. adds “Jesus,” with a few uncials and the bulk of the cursives, etc., against the best MSS. and all the ancient versions.

64 γάρ, “for” is added in Text. Rec., with many uncials, most cursives, and several ancient versions; but the weight of authority is against it, as also yet more in favour of γενώμεθα, instead of the present form (

γιν.).

65 Dean Alford has no reason to identify “us” in verse 18 with the” world” in verse 19. There is marked difference in the two verses, and no room for the confusion of the saints with the world. Nor was he the worst instance of such confusion.

66 There is no real ground for Bishop Middleton’s remark (Doctrine of the Greek Article, pp. 350, 351, Rose’s ed. 1845) that κόσμος here and in Galatians 6:14 is one of those words which partake of the nature of proper names, and so dispense with the article exceptionally in these two instances. The true reason has nothing to do with its emphatic position, and simply is that the word is used characteristically in both, and hence, though we cannot so express it in English, more forcibly than if “the” world in either case were presented as an objective fact. Hence the critical reading which drops not only ὁ but τῳ in Galatians 6:14 is right. Further, it is not the fact that Plutarch (περὶ Στωικ. ἐναντ.) omits the article With κόσμος, for it is inserted in both Reiske’s ed. 1778, x. 348. and Wyttenbach’s, Oxon. 1800, v. 193.The Bishop’s citation was from an old edition and a bad text. Winer and T. S.

Green follow in the same wake, classing k. with many other words like ἥλιος, γῆ, which may drop the article, as nearly equivalent to proper names. This is as to all defect of analysis. They probably misled Alford and Ellicott, but not Dr. Lightfoot, who evidently sees nothing irregular, and simply remarks that the sentence thus (i.e., by the anarthrous form) gains in terseness. So in our passage the entire clause is intentionally and essentially characteristic, θεὸς ἦν ἐν Χριστῳ κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῳ, and τόν would have brought in fact, which is exactly what is not intended, any more than ἦν καταλλάσσων = reconciliavit as Wetstein says. It is the aspect or bearing of His presence in Christ, not an accomplished fact (which is expressed by the aorist part. in verse 18).

67 “Observandum hic Paulo negotium esse cum fidelibus. testatur se quotidie id illos perferre hoc mandatum. non ergo passus est Christus ut semel tantum peccata nostra expiaret; neque in hoc institutum Evangelium ut quae ante Baptismum.” etc. 1. Calv. Nov. Opera Omnia, vii. 244, Amstel. 1671.

68 The old interpretation is particularly objectionable, Dei enim sumus adjutores. Bengel on 1 Corinthians 3:9 put the true thought neatly: Sumus operarii Dei et co-operarii invicem.

69 In this case the order would also differ, probably by placing ἑαυτούς before σ. so as to give the former the more emphasis.

70 “In pressuris, complures patent viae, sed difficiles; in necessitatibis, una, difficilis; in angustiis, nulla.” Beng. Gn. in l.

71 Here we may notice the strange misconception of the Vulgate, followed as usual by Wiclif and the Rhemish. “eandem remunerationem habentes,” “ye that have the same reward,” “having the same reward.” This inverts the meaning: he wanted the reward in the same kind, not that they had it. Tyndale understood the phrase as “I promyse you lyke rewarde with me as to my children;” and Cranmer follows in the same wake. “I promyse unto you lyke reward, as unto children,” taking the accusative as the complement or direct regimen of the verb. The Geneva Version exhibits another variety, nearer the true sense, “Now I require of you the same recompense,” etc. The Authorised Version seems best, not applying any fresh verb, but taking the accusative absolutely, or rather as in apposition with a cognate accusative supposed in the verb following.

72 This opening phrase is very compressed, being a kind of pregnant construction, and to be resolved either with Winer as μὴ γίν. ἑτεροζυγ. καὶ οὕτως ὁμοζ. ἀπ., or more simply perhaps μὴγίν. δμοζ. ἀπ. καὶ οὕτως ἑτεροζυγ. The sense is plainly a heterogeneous yoke, not another part of it as Grotius, nor a beam with diverse weights as Theophylact.

73 The MSS fluctuate as to the form of the word,

βελίαλ being the nearest to the Hebrew original, corrupted through Syriac to βελίαρ which is best supported (m B C P, more than fifty cursives, and other excellent authorities). Some give βελίαν and βελίαβ.

74 Good witnesses (B D L P, etc.), followed by a few eminent critics, read ἡμεῖς.... ἐμέν, “we are,” for ὑμεῖς.... ἐστέ with C Dcorr. E F G K, the mass of cursives, and most of the versions and commentators.

75 Some punctuate thus: “if also I did regret, for I see that that letter grieved you if also for a time, now I rejoice,” etc.

76 ἐργάζεται p.m. B C D B P, etc.

κατ- Text. Rec. with corr. F G K L, and most cursives, etc.

77 B C E K L P and a great many cursives, etc., etc. Steph. ὑμῶν τ. ὑπ. ἡμῶν; etc.

ὑπ. ὑμῶν; G, etc.

ἡμῶντ. ὑπ. ἡμῶν; but EIz. with some cursives, Vulg., Gothic, etc., ἡμῶν τ. ὑμῶν.

78 T. Rec. omits

δέ, which affects the sentence considerably, and also reads ὑμῶν instead of ἡμῶν.

79 Elz., not Steph., adds

οὖν with a few cursives.

80 “Sed quid est quod addit: etiamsi me poenituerit? Nam si fateamur Paulo displicuisse quod scripserat, sequetur non levis absurditas inconsiderato magis impulsu scriptam fuisse superiorem epistolam quam Spiritus directione. Respondeo, verbum Poenitendi improprie hic positum pro Dolorem capere. Paulus enim, quum moerore afficeret Corinthios, doloris partem capiebat ipse quoque, ac sibi quodammodo tristitiam simul infligebat. Proinde ergo est acsi diceret: Tametsi invitus vos pupugi, ac mihi doluit quod vobis durus esse cogerer, nunc dolere ob hac causam desino, dum video utile vobis fuisse.” Calv. Opp. vii. 250.

81 This seems a singular slip in an unquestionably great scholar as to a nicety of Greek phrase; for καὶ εἰ (when used as a composite, instead of the first as a mere copulative) differs from εἰ καί in that the former treats the condition as itself altogether improbable, the latter raises no doubt as to the fact, though reduced in moment as much as possible.

82 Text. Rec., with most, reads

τὸν πλ., but p.m. B C P etc., to; pl. as in verse 3,

ὑπέρ instead of

παρά. Krebs seems not to have been aware of this last fact.

83 Ibid.

84 The addition of d

έξασθαι ἡμᾶς in Text. Rec. is supported by some cursives and versions, against the great mass of good authority 85 Lachmann actually adopts the strange reading of the Vatican MS. supported by other witnesses, ἐξ ἡμων ἐν ὑμῖν. Internal evidence would be decisive against this if the external evidence were not as strong as it is.

86 Even so difficulty has been felt because of the absence of the finite verb expressed; but it seems plain enough, as Bengel long ago suggested, that ἔδωκαν, which follows in verse 5, is understood in the earliest clause, and this removes all appearance of what has been styled “a sentence entirely shattered in passing through the apostle’s mind.” But it is no less plain that Bengel was mistaken in supposing that χάριν and κοιν. depend on ἔδωκαν, for they are unequivocally objects of δεόμενοι, which also takes a genitive of the person.

“Hoc verbum totam periochae structuram sustinet, tali sensu: Non modo gratiani, communionem, sive δόμα, munus illud dederunt, sed plane se ipsos dederunt. Ita Chrysost. Homil. xvi. in 2 Cor. coll. maxime Homil. xvii., ubi repetit ὑπὲρ δύναμιν ἔδωκαν. Cum eodem verbo ἔδωκαν cohaerent nominativi illi, αὐθαίρετοι, δεόμενοι, et ab eodem peudent accusativi, χάριν κοινωνίαν, ἑαυτούς, sensu facili et suavi.” Gnomon in loco. ed. Stuttg. 1866.

87 I see no need whatever of giving

εἰς ὑμᾶς so wide a rendering as Mr. Green’s “on reaching you,” or even “among you” as is oftener done. it is not for ἐν ὑμῖν but more exact as it stands. No more is there any real ground for translating ἀλλά in verse 7 “therefore,” as in A.V. “But” introduces anew appeal.

88 B C Dp.m. F G L many cursives and ancient versions omit αὐτοῦ “himself.”

89 Text. Rec. has

ὑμῶν “your,” contrary to the oldest and best MSS which read ἡμῶν “our.”

90 Instead of Text. Rec.

προνοούμενοι with later MSS (or better

γάρ added as in C. etc.), the best read

προνοοῦμεν γάρ “for we provide.”

91 For Text. Rec.

ἐνδείξασθε with many old MSS, is real in B Dp.m. Ep.m. F G etc.

92 The

καί “and” of the Text. Rec. has no adequate authority and encumbers the sense.

2 Corinthians 6

The truth of separation.

Separation in the Scripture is twofold.

1. From whatever is contrary to the mind and will of God.

2. Unto God Himself.

The underlying principle is that it is impossible for God to fully bless and use any of His children who are in compromise or complicity with evil.

1. Separation from evil implies:

a. Separation is desire, motive, and act from the world and the evil world system.

b. Separation from false teachers—vessels of dishonor. (2 Timothy 2:20-21; 2 John 9-11)

2. Separation is not from contact with evil in the world or the church, but from complicity and conformity to it. Verses 16-18, John 17:15, Galatians 6:1.

3. The reward of separation is the full manifestation of the divine A. Fatherhood of God (verses 17-18)

B. Unhindered communion and worship (Hebrews 13:13-15)

C. Fruitful service (2 Timothy 2:21)

Worldliness brings the loss of these.

As always, the Lord is the model of separation. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners (Hebrews 7:26). At the same time He was in contact with sinners for their salvation.

See 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Paul exemplified Christ's example in the matter of commitment to the will of God and separation from the world's system.

1. He was no man's slave, yet He made Himself everyone's slave, that He might win more men to Christ.

2. To the Jews, he became a Jew that he might win Jews to Christ.

3. To the Gentiles he became a Gentile that he might win them.

4. To the weak he became weak that he might win the weak.

5. In conclusion, he says, "I have been all things to all men, so that by every possible means I might win them for Christ."

While doing all this for God, he never compromised one iota of principle to the evil world of the world's system.

The effect of the first letter was being felt in the assembly. Things were being rectified. Paul, as God's co-worker, urges the believers to use the grace of God to continue the cleansing process. Now is the appropriate time, now is the day of deliverance from sin and evil.

V. 3-Paul is doing his part; he is living a blameless life, at great inconvenience, so that his service would not be discredited.

V. 4-In the following ways we commend ourselves to you as true servants of God. Then through verse 10 he tabulates certain experiences which would prove beyond all doubt that he was a servant of God.

Due to the influence of false teachers, there were still some in fellowship who were reticent to receive Paul and his apostolic authority. Many had reservations.

Verses 11-13 are an appeal to such.

“Our mouth is open to you, we are hiding nothing, keeping nothing back; and our heart is wide open to you. There is no lack of room in our hearts for you, but you lack room in your hearts for us. By way of return then do this for me, as my children open wide your hearts to us.”

V. 14-Be ye not unequally yoked etc.

Christians are new creations and therefore must not be united with dead unbelievers.

1. Fellowship = sharing, participation.

2. Communion = close relationship (as in marriage or with God).

3. Concord = what harmony is there between the holiness and purity of Christ and the wickedness and impurity of Satan?

4. What part or portion = suggests a deep sharing of things in common. What can a person who accepts the Faith have in common with one who rejects it?

5. V. 16-What agreement = what common ground can there be between the temple of God and a heathen temple?

Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are God’s temple. Quote 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

V. 17- Paul now urges the believers to take certain actions.

1. Come out

2. Be ye separate

3. Touch not the unclean thing

The result of such actions:

1. Those who follow will be welcomed and received by the Father

2. Have fellowship with the Father

Chapter 7:1-The conclusion of the matter.

Having these divine promises of blessing, we should cleanse ourselves from everything and everyone who contaminates the body and the spirit.

2 Corinthians 9-11

2 Corinthians 9

But the apostle has a good deal more to say on a subject so constantly and often urgently needed in the assembly, where the poor are apt ever to abound. He had brought before the Corinthians the bright example of the Macedonian believers, notwithstanding circumstances most unpromising naturally. And this had stirred up the apostle to urge on Titus the completion of this grace also in Achaia which the Corinthians had begun a year ago. Not that he spoke by commandment, but through the zeal of others and proving the genuineness of their love, while setting before them the incomparable grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to act on their souls. So God in giving the manna to Israel took care that, whatever the inequality in gathering, none should be in excess and none want: was there to be less regard for each other in the church? Love desired not the case of those, nor pressure on these, but rather a principle of equality in mutual consideration of each other, and this wherever the church is found. Then he sets forth the hearty diligence in this matter of Titus, who had gone about what remained to be done at Corinth with two other brethren; for thus had the apostle lent the contribution importance whilst guarding it from the smallest imputation of evil, and calling on the Corinthians to make good their love and his own boasting of them.

“For about the ministration for the saints it is superfluous for me to write to you. For I know your readiness which I boast of you to Macedonians that Achaia hath been prepared a year ago, and your93 zeal

stimulated the mass. Yet I sent the brethren in order that our boasting of you may not be made vain in this respect, that (as I said) ye may be prepared; lost, haply, if Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we may be ashamed, that we say not ye in this confidence.94 I thought it necessary therefore to exhort the brethren that they would go before unto you and complete beforehand your blessing promised before,95 that it be ready thus as blessing, not as96 covetousness. But this [I say], he that soweth Sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth in blessings shall reap also in blessings; each as he hath purposed97 in his heart, not of sorrow or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." (Vers. 1-7.)

From Galatians 2: "we know how earnest our apostle was like the rest as to the general principle, and how in this particular case his heart went out to the distressed saints in Jerusalem, none the less because his part of the work was emphatically toward the Gentiles. But his delicacy is no less striking and instructive here, where he gives the saints in Corinth full credit for the same love which overflowed his own heart; "it is superfluous for me to write to you." They had been taught it of God themselves. Why then did he write so amply? Not because he did not know their ready mind; not because they had failed to give him ground to glory in what God had wrought in this respect; for as he in the last chapter boasted of the Macedonians triumphing over their trying and needy circumstances in their most generous remembrance of the poor saints in Judea, so now he lets the Corinthian saints know his habit of boasting of themselves to Macedonians, and very especially in their preparation for this call a year ago.

Hence, no doubt, it is that in his zeal for themselves and the Lord's honour in them, and seeking the happy flow of love in every way, he speaks (in the epistolary aorist) of sending the brethren referred to in the close of the preceding chapter, in order to guard in this particular against mishap in his boast on their behalf. He wanted them to be prepared beyond danger of disappointment as far as pains on his part could secure it. How painful for him, not to say for them, it would be if brethren came from Macedonia and found shortcoming in the very saints, the report of whose zeal had acted so powerfully in kindling their own! What shame on all sides if this confidence in the Corinthians should not prove well-founded! He did not wish, as we know from 2 Corinthians 16, that there should be collections when he came himself; as he would guard against haste on the one hand or personal influence on the other, or malevolent insinuation. But his love for them and desire for the Lord's glory in the business made him exhort Titus and his two companions to go on before to Corinth and previous to his own arrival complete their fore-promised blessing. Compare, for this use of "blessing," Genesis 33:11, Judges 1:15, 2 Kings 5:15; it is love not in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth, 1 John 3:18.

The apostle's longing was, not merely that their proposed beneficence should be ready, but in such sort as blessing, and not as covetousness, meeting thus the danger on both sides. As he would have it a blessing on the givers' part, he repudiates all covetousness on the part of those receiving it for the poor saints. He does not seem to limit his caution to the former nor to allude in covetousness to a niggardly spirit, any more than to

make πλ. mean “tenacity,” instead of the desire of having more which soon runs into tricky means to get more.

But this further he adds, a wholesome thing to remember, being truth in God’s moral government, and of all moment in our life on earth: he that sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that sows with blessings shall reap also with blessings. It is no question of correspondence in kind, but it may be spiritually also and so much the better. Still it is true, and especially among God’s people, as it always was. (See Prov. 11:24, 25.) Scripture indeed teems with it in one form or another; and experience is the sure and plain commentary. God despises not what is given to the poor saints; but the spirit of giving is far more important than the gift. Therefore the apostle follows up the apothegm he had just applied: each just as he has predetermined in his heart, not of sorrow or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver, quoting Prov. 22:8 (Alex. LXX). To grudge and grieve over what is given is unworthy of a saint of His; to exact it no less unworthy of His servant. How needed is faith here as everywhere! how energetic is love, which is our only due spring in this as in all else practically, whatever the encouragements God may and does give those whom grace has called and strengthens to walk in the path of Christ! Himself the sovereign giver of all good, He loves to see the reflection of His grace and blessing in His children.

The close of the apostolic exhortation on giving is admirably in keeping with all we have had already. Not only does God love a cheerful giver, but He is able in His grace to see that there shall be means to give, and not in

this form only, but for every good work. “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth.” (Prov. 11:24.)

“And God is able to make every grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in every [thing], may abound unto every good work; as it is written, He scattered, he gave to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.” (Vers. 8, 9.) No doubt that God has now revealed Himself in Christ according to His own nature, in view of heaven and eternity; no doubt He has given us life in His Son and redemption through His blood and union with that glorified man at His right hand, that we might glory in nought but His cross here below, and count not life dear to serve the Lord in His way and our measure, as we wait for Him from heaven. But this does not hinder the government of God and the pleasure He takes in blessing large and generous hearts, as of old, so now. Special privileges do not forbid His general principles, and His power finds a way in His wisdom to harmonise all. And the apostle, who knew better than any what it was to suffer with Christ and for Christ, is just the suited one, out of his capacious mind and heart, to communicate the assurance of these His unchanged ways, for which he cites Psalm 112:9; the beautiful description of man blessed in the kingdom when divine judgment introduces it by-and-by. Then the fear of Jehovah and obedience will have might on the same side, and judgment will return to righteousness, and wealth in no wise corrupt it, but it endures for ever with a spirit of compassion and gracious consideration of others. There may be judicial ways peculiar to that day as looking on his enemies, and his horn exalted, etc.; but true righteousness, far from being hard, dispenses with liberal hand from that which grace supplies

abundantly. Nor could it be otherwise in the estimate of a true heart that now, in the day when grace is vouchsafed in other and deeper ways, it should fail in this. It is not so however; and He who shows us His mercy beyond measure or thought is able to make every grace abound, and this that we might have the blessed favour of imitating Him here too, or as the apostle puts it to the Corinthian saints, “that ye, it every time having every kind of sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work,” as it is written in the Psalms.

There is no need, we may by the way remark, of altering the force of “righteousness” here or elsewhere. It does not mean “benevolence” as the Geneva Version renders it with many a commentator, but comprehends it. (Cf. Matt. 6:1, 2.) Righteousness means consistency with relationship; and what can be more consistent than generous remembrance of want in others, especially in the household of faith, on the part of those who own that all is of grace in their own case?

But this is not all. Not only is God able thus to do, but He, the God of all grace, acts accordingly. “But he that supplieth seed to the sower and bread for eating will” supply and multiply your sowing and increase the fruits of your righteousness, [ye] being enriched in everything unto all liberality which worketh out through us thanksgiving to God.” (Vers. 10, 11) It is not a wish or prayer as in the Authorised Version, nor is it (with the same Version, the Vulgate, Luther, Calvin, etc.) correct to construe χορηγήσαι “minister” or supply (were this the true form) with ἄρτον εἰς βρ. (“bread for your food”). Compare Isaiah 55:10. It is an assurance that the God who amply provides for ourselves loves to furnish means as well as opportunities of blessing to others, as He

delights in owning and rewarding these fruits of righteousness, which are really of His grace, as if they were ours and not of Him by us. The form of the sentence following is slightly irregular, the sense quite sure and plain, without introducing the parenthesis of the English or other versions. God would thus increase the fruits of their righteousness, “while ye are in everything being enriched with every kind of liberality, which is such as worketh out through us thanksgiving to God.” The word translated “liberality” is given in Romans 12:8 as “simplicity,” which is no doubt its literal force. But thence, from conveying the absence of excuse for not giving, it easily derived the sense here implied. The apostle acknowledges the source of all they had given — that they might abound in good works, reminds them of his own share in it whether in strengthening their zeal or in dispensing the fruit, and anticipates the thanksgiving of those about to be relieved by it rising up to God.

* The future appears in the most ancient and best MSS, B C D P, fifteen cursives, in the old Latin, Vulg. Cop. Arm. Aeth., etc.

On this last thought, the worthy conclusion of all previously urged, the apostle dilates to the end of the chapter. “Because the ministration of the service is not only filling up the wants of the saints, but also abounding through many thanksgivings to God; through the proof of this service [they] glorified God for the subjection of your confession unto the gospel of Christ and liberality of fellowship toward them and toward all; and their supplication for you, while longing for you, on account of the surpassing grace of God [bestowed] on you. Thanks [be] to God for his unspeakable gift.” (Vers.

12-15.) Thus is shown the true and proper character of such a loving contribution for the poor saints. It is an honourable service and a ministry of love. It meets their wants, but it flows over, and rises into many thanksgivings to God. It draws out praise from those who receive it in this subjection to His name; for why also thus liberally remember them at all? It rouses them to prayer with earnest longing for those who manifest such grace. And if such be the blessed effect of love working in the heart and the supplying the poor saints with that which otherwise perishes in the using, what shall we say or feel, as we think of Christ? Thanks to God for His undescribable gift. The reader will agree with me that it is strong to suppose the apostle could speak in such unmeasured terms of liberality in earthly things, however of grace. Spoken of Christ, of all God is to us in and by Him, what can be more proper? One would scarcely have deemed it needful to make even this brief remark, if Calvin and many others had not allowed a turn so derogatory, as it seems to me.

2 Corinthians 10.

From the exhaustive treatment of giving and receiving according to Christ which filled the two preceding chapters, the apostle turns to vindicate the authority given him in the Lord. This Satan had been bringing into question among the Corinthians, not merely to discredit the servant, but thereby to undermine the testimony and separate the saints from Him whose grace and glory were interwoven with it most intimately.

In the beginning of the epistle, now that they had begun to judge themselves in God’s sight truly, if as yet imperfectly, he could open his own heart and speak of

his ways and his motives which had been so basely misconstrued; he had just alluded to his authority enough to indicate his possession of it with calmness of spirit but also unwillingness to exercise it with severity. He even appeals to God as a witness upon his soul that it was to spare them, not through fear or levity or any other unworthy reason, he had not come as yet to Corinth, but with marvellous tact and gracious skill he binds up, with his explanation of what had been misunderstood, the divine certainty we enjoy in Christ by God's word and the power of the Spirit given to us. And then, just touching on the case of discipline which Satan had used and was still seeking to use to separate the Corinthians from the apostle, not only in judgment but in affection and in the mutual confidence which springs from it, he lets them know how that an evangelistic door, even opened to him in the Lord, failed to turn his loving heart from themselves at this critical juncture; but spite of all, he thanks God for always loading him in triumph in Christ, as in an ancient procession of victory where sweet spices were being burnt, harbinger of death to some of the captives and of life to others. This gives occasion to the admirable setting forth of the gospel of the glory of Christ, the ministration of the Spirit in an earthen vessel in contrast with that of the law which false teachers would ever mingle with it, and to the manifestation of the superiority of life in Christ over all that can obscure, menace, hinder or destroy, which runs through 2 Corinthians 3 - 2 Corinthians 6:10. Thence he returns to his relations with the Corinthian saints, but not without exhortation to keep them clear of every association of Satan, flesh and world, inconsistent with Christ.

After this, to the end of 2 Corinthians 7, he freely speaks of what had tended to make a practical breach between him and them. Then in true grace and wisdom he who took nothing for himself from the saints at Corinth proves how his heart beat freely toward them by informing them of the grace displayed in Macedonia notwithstanding their well-known and deep poverty in liberally contributing to the poor saints in Judea, and by giving the Corinthians an opportunity of proving the genuineness of their love, especially as they had begun a year ago but had not yet given effect to it; a work in which Titus shared the gracious desires of the apostle, not only as to the help itself for the suffering poor but also that the saints in Corinth should not fall behind their boasting about them. But therein he manifests with equal strength the avoidance of all reproach on the part of those engaged with himself in administering the relief, and the manifold blessing of such liberality, and God's delight in it, whether one thinks of the saints that give or of the saints that receive through His grace who is Himself the unspeakable gift of God.

The apostle did not love to speak of himself or even of his authority, high as it was and most surely conferred by the Lord. But there was a necessity for the Corinthians as for the Galatians; but here he reserves it for and pursues it to the close of the epistle; whereas there he could not but begin with it, the call being yet more urgent.

"But I myself Paul entreat you by the meekness and gentleness of the Christ, [I] who according to appearance [am] mean among you but absent am bold toward you — but I beseech that present I may not be bold with the confidence with which I count to be daring

against some that count of us as walking according to flesh. For walking in flesh we do not war according to flesh. For the arms of our warfare [are] not fleshly but powerful with God to the pulling down of strongholds, pulling down reasonings and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and leading captive every thought unto the obedience of Christ, and being in readiness [or ready] to avenge every disobedience when your obedience shall have been fulfilled." (Vers. 1-6.)

It seems that Paul physically had nothing of a showy presence, such as men like generally, most of all perhaps Greeks. But besides his was a lowly and gracious bearing which judged self and set it aside, as in everything, so particularly in the delicate task of dealing with others; which did not suit the Corinthian mind, nor seem in keeping with the apostolic office: especially as the apostle could and did to them write severely now and then in his first epistle. His adversaries accordingly took advantage of all this in seeking to aggrandise themselves and to lower the apostle and his teaching. He appears here and elsewhere to take up their words and meet them in the Spirit, as one who had learnt the lesson, if over saint did, of death and resurrection with Christ. He therefore introduces himself, now that they had morally compelled it, with straightforwardness and dignity; and he entreats them by the meekness and gentleness of the Christ, which had as great price in his eyes, as it seemed to have none in theirs. Did detractors tax him with a mean appearance, but withal boldness when absent, that is, in his letters? Well, he says, I beseech that I may not when present have to be bold (θαρρῆσαι) with the confidence with which I am (not "reckoned," but) minded, or think to be daring

(τολμῆσαι) against some that think of us as walking according to flesh. Whatever the energy and fervid zeal and depth of feeling and strength of will found in his natural character, Paul had borne himself among the Corinthians with a self-forgetting humility and the forbearance of active love. It was what he had seen in the Master he served, and this reproduced itself in his adoring heart and in his ways. Let men beware of despising in the servant what was the fruit of the perfection of Christ. But who also so unsparing in his words? Is there the least incongruity? What can be so outspoken as love — the love of Christ? Did Paul find pleasure in blaming his “beloved sons” in the faith? It was and must be due to their state if he came with a rod, or in love and the spirit of meekness. So far from liking to censure, as enemies insinuated, he beseeches that he may not when present have to exercise his authority with a power withering to those who opposed the Lord and sought to cloak their own carnality under such an imputation against him. Revelling in the grace of God for his own soul, it was his deepest grief to see saints misled by Satan, forsaking their own mercies, grieving the Spirit, and putting the Lord’s name to disrepute. It was not of Paul to lord it over the faith of any; he was a workman, and a fellow-workman, of their joy. And it was his joy far more than theirs. But he was servant in all he had received of the Lord Jesus, and responsible to use his authority where requisite. And as he had spoken out in his letter, so he would act when present; but he would rejoice if no such need arose. For he sought not himself, nor his things, not theirs, but them.

“For walking in the flesh we war not according to flesh.” All who live here below can say the former; how few, the

latter — at least as the apostle could. But it was because the weapons of his warfare were not fleshly but mighty "with" God, "before," "according to," or "for," Him.98 Flesh prides itself on its own resources within which it entrenches itself against God, who works in His children when dependent, least of all in His own when independent. The enemy was seeking to bring back again fleshly wisdom, which like all that is of the first man attracts nature and exalts itself against the knowledge of God, for this is inseparable from Christ, and from Christ dead and risen. If we war not according to flesh, it must be by pulling down reasonings and every high thing exalted (or exalting itself thus) and leading captive every thought unto the obedience of the Christ. This is the object and effect of dependence, as wrought by the Spirit of God. For there is nothing harder to man than contentedness with being nothing; nor does aught hinder the obedience of Christ more than subtle self-seeking.

We may see in the first how the apostle employed those arms with God to the overthrowing of strongholds, whatever the reasoning or the high thing that was lifted up against the knowledge of God. Take their fleshly zeal for Paul, Apollos, or Cephas: he brings in Christ and His cross to judge its roots, declaring that the former were but ministering servants through whom they themselves believed and as the Lord gave to each; and in fact all theirs, and they Christ's and Christ God's. It was a carnal corruption of their privileges. Take their worldly ease: with such an unbelieving anticipation of the day when we shall all reign together, he contrasts the apostles set by God as the last appointed to death, despised, suffering, and become as the world's

offscouring until now. Take their appeal to law courts: he confronts the indignity of saints, who are to judge the world and angels, prosecuting suits one against another before the unjust. Take their laxity about temple feasts: he shows that their boasted intelligence about the vanity of idols was exposing them to Satan's snare, and drawing them into communion with demons. Take lastly their denial that the dead rise: he proves that it virtually upsets the resurrection of Christ, and consequently the gospel with all their heavenly privileges and hope. Thus admirably does the former epistle lead captive every thought into the obedience of Christ.

But the apostle adds another word which yet more brings out the grace and wisdom which wrought in and by him. "And being in readiness [or, as we say, being ready] to avenge every disobedience when your obedience shall have been fulfilled." (Ver. 6.) He loved the saints, and even more Christ's glory in the church. Therefore he could stay away and be mis-represented, but still wait till the word was brought home by the Spirit. This had been in part at least: the gross evil had been not only got rid of, but the saints in Corinth had been deeply moved in judging their own haughty and insensible state, and were now in danger really of' veering to the opposite extreme of judicial hardness toward the one who had not only sinned without shame but ensnared them also. Grace becomes the church as well as righteousness, yea it should characterise us now as earthly righteousness was looked for in Israel. But grace in the apostle could wait, not with indifference at any time, but in all patience now that conscience was working, till their obedience should be fulfilled, never giving up Christ's title to punish every sort of

disobedience, and not merely what was scandalous. He would have them all with himself united for the Lord against every evil thing. The church must renounce Christ if it sit down in quiet acceptance of what denies His name. But grace knows how to hail a little that is of God, and looks for all according to His will in due time, in the solemn judgment of what is repugnant to His nature and word.

Such is the way the apostle sets forth beseechingly the authority he had received in the Lord against the detraction of adversaries who were even yet exercising a poisonous influence over the saints. Nothing was farther from him than the fleshly, vacillating, and tortuous policy they attributed to him. But these are the common tactics of the enemy. The first to brand others with lack of spirituality, of fidelity or even integrity, are those who are themselves guilty in these very respects, and spend their breath in a restless endeavour to imbue all they meet with their own surmisings; until they seem at last not only to believe their every impression, but to be satisfied that rancour is true love and invective nothing but faithfulness to Christ. The apostle, after showing that it is one thing to walk in flesh, another to walk according to it, declares that we do not wax according to flesh. He puts it not as a merely personal question of fact, but as a matter of general christian principle and practice. The warfare of the saint derives its character from Christ. The liberty to which we are called gives no licence for flesh, as if violence or vituperation were consecrated in His service. His name gives no just plea to war according to flesh, but on the contrary reproves such carnality, and ought to awaken suspicion of the end because of the way. The arms of our warfare, powerful

as they are with God to overthrow flesh's strongholds, are of small value in carnal eyes. The apostle insists on all being reduced to the obedience of Christ, and on readiness to avenge every disobedience when their disobedience should have been completed. What are we here for if not for that obedience? Yet grace and wisdom would first deal with what most openly and seriously dishonours God; and then, when conscience answers to the word, would look for more, yea for all that is pleasing in His sight. God is in the assembly, His dwelling, His holy temple (however men may forget or fritter down the solemn fact), and surely there to give efficacy to His own word and will, as He then was to vindicate by His power the authority of His servant when undermined or denied.

"Do ye look on things according to appearance?99 If any one hath trust in himself that he is of Christ,100 let him of101 himself consider this again, that even as he [is] of Christ, so also we.102 For even103 if I should boast somewhat more abundantly of our authority which the Lord gave104 for building up and not for your overthrowing, I shall not be ashamed; that I seem not as it were to terrify you by letters: because his letters, saith one,105[are] weighty and strong, but the presence of the body weak and the speech contemptible. Let such a one consider this, that such as we are in word by letters when absent, such also in deed when present. For we dare not class or compare ourselves with some of those that commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves among themselves and comparing themselves106 with themselves, are unintelligent [or without understanding]." (Vers. 7-12.)

It seems clear that Paul had nothing in presence or action, any more than in rank or position, to attract the fleshly or worldly mind. So we see elsewhere that the heathen who were struck by the miracles wrought called Barnabas Zeus, and Paul Hermes. Some of the Corinthians indulged in similar depreciation. They could not understand an apostle of such mean appearance, and a style of speech so little suitable to an ambassador of Christ. In this last respect they were much more fastidious than the Lycaonians who felt the force of Paul's words. External manner had an egregious over-value in Achaian eyes. The apostle at once brings in Christ, who reduces all men and all things to their true level. "Do ye look on things according to appearance? If any one hath trust in himself that he is of Christ, let him of himself consider which answers to it. Bathe goes farther. "For even if I should boast somewhat more abundantly of our authority which the Lord gave for building up and not for your overthrowing, I shall not be ashamed; that I seem not as it were to terrify you by letters." Now he quietly, but with firmness, lets them know how much more he might have put forward his apostolic authority. He had not talked, we may be sure, of the blindness he had inflicted on Elymas; he had written in his first epistle of delivering the incestuous offender to Satan, as well as of coming with a rod for the refractory in general. But he had not come, and these vain men treated the warning as vain words. But the Lord gave not in vain the function of acting as His spiritual right hand on earth, though its prime aim was for blessing, not punishment. Still the hand that can wield the trowel can use the scourge; and it were better to fear for their own bold irreverence than to put him to the proof, whether the Lord was with him now.

The apostle's call was to build up, not to cast down; and love it is which builds up. But there was opposition to the Lord quite as much or more than to Paul in questioning the authority given him. And in order to sap and destroy it, advantage was taken of his words and ways to impute fickleness, vacillation, and untruthfulness, as we gather from the first chapter; lack of moral courage when present and despicable weakness in person and ministry, as we see here, aggravated by the heroic style of his letters when absent; craft, guile, and self-seeking, as it would seem from 2 Corinthians 12. Self-will never did lack material for disparaging the person, character, office and work of a servant beyond all example used, kept, and honoured of the Lord. If he refrained then from saying more, as he easily might and naturally would, of his authority in and from the Lord, it was that he might not seem as if he would frighten them by his letters. And this because his letters, said one, are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence weak and his speech of no account. Such was the carping of his adversaries or of one in particular. We can understand it well. Neither spirituality nor unworldliness nor faithfulness vaunts itself nor seeks to lower others; but flesh betrays thereby its pretensions and its party-spirit.

There were various parties in the Corinthians, and some who strove to stand clear in grace and truth; but of all this schismatic activity the Christ-party, I should gather, was the most obstinate. Certainly we have no allusion in the second Epistle to any other; but there appears to be a trace that the spirit of those who said, "I am of Christ," claiming a peculiar and exclusive connection with Him, was not yet extinguished. The root of this error is judged

in 2 Corinthians 5, especially verse 16. We can readily understand how it might creep in among men boasting of having seen, heard, and perhaps followed the Lord in the days of His flesh. Here the apostle bids the man (who is confident in himself that he is of Christ) of himself to think this again, that even as he is of Christ, so is Paul. How simple is the truth, how destructive of airy dreams which would misuse even Christ to flatter self! Nor is anything so holy or humble as the faith which cleaves to Him. Similarly of his authority from the Lord, as of his relationship to Him, he bids such a detractor think (ver. 11) that "such as we are in word by letters when absent, such also in deed [we will be] when present."

It was the adversaries who had nothing to boast but words or manners, show or position. When he came, the apostle would know not the word of those puffed up, but the power; but he desired earnestly that it might be, through self-judgment on their part, a visit in love and in a spirit of meekness. But their state might compel him to use a rod, as it did to speak of himself when he would rather discourse only of Christ. Their boastfulness about themselves, their alienation from him, went along with real evil and error in some who misled them, with whose vaulting ambition he deals afterwards. For the present he contents himself with this severe rebuke: "For we dare not class or compare ourselves with some of those that commend themselves; but they, measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves, are unintelligent." With this clique of self-satisfied men the apostle did not venture (he severely says, though with courtesy) to rank or compare himself and brethren like him; but he retires with a

Parthian shaft, for he lets them know that to measure or compare themselves thus is the reverse of that intelligence on which they most plumed themselves.

Another thing forgotten by his adversaries the apostle here introduces. The sphere of work is not a question of human choice or judgment, but of the divine will. There were those who slighted the labours of Paul, and their fruit at Corinth; but as he had not entered on that field of his own will, so he had toiled in the face of difficulty and with signal blessing guaranteed for his encouragement from the first.

“We however will not boast as to things”.107 unmeasured, but according to the measure of the rule which God distributed to us, a measure to reach as far even as you. For we do not,108 as though not reaching unto you, overstretch ourselves, for even as far as you we advanced in the gospel of Christ, not boasting as to things unmeasured in another’s toils, but having hope, while your faith increaseth, to be enlarged among you according to our rule unto abundance, to preach the gospel unto the [quarters] beyond you, not to boast in another’s rule as to things made ready. But he that boasteth, in the Lord let him boast; for not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.” (Vers. 13-18.)

The saving grace of God widely as it goes forth, even to all, falls nevertheless under the ordering hand of God who has His will about the sphere as well as the character of His service.

Others might boast immoderately. This is natural to the flesh, especially in vain minds. But the apostle laboured as he lived in the fear of God. Not a thought crossed him

of displaying abilities; he was a servant, a bondman, of Jesus Christ; and so to him it was no question of liking or disliking, but of doing the work assigned to him, “according to the measure of the rule which God distributed to us, a measure to reach even to you.”

In truth as all the christian life is meant to be a matter of obedience, so in particular the work of the Lord; else will it speedily degenerate into vain glory or slighting others, and often better men than our. selves. So certainly it was here. The Lord had not called them as he did Paul to Corinth. They at their ease had followed where Paul had wrought with constant self-denial, and not outward labours only but deep exercise of soul; a labour in which grace alone could sustain by the Holy Ghost in continual dependence on the Lord. And the Lord had rejoiced his heart with much people, even in that corrupt city, brought to the knowledge of Himself. This was a work of divine power and goodness; but some had risen up or entered in since the apostle’s departure, whose worldly spirit depreciated the work, and claimed superior power. If Paul had begun, they were the men to finish. Was he not indeed too ready to begin and leave his work incomplete as he roved from place to place? For their part they preferred the chiefs who stayed and reared a statelier edifice, as in Jerusalem. This they now strove to do at Corinth.

Such vapouring the apostle simply and thoroughly disposes of by the great truth that God apportions the sphere of labour. Those who venture on an enterprise of the sort without God, must not wonder if their service be without His honour and blessing. Happy the man who is wont to look to God, not only for his soul and in his walk, but also in his work. Nor does God fail to vouchsafe His

guidance in this as in all things where His servants wait on Him. It was a. new language doubtless to the self-exalting men of Corinth, jealous of the power and authority of the apostle. Power belongs to God, but He loves to use it in and by those who walk by faith; and now was the fitting time and place to make known the secret to the saints. It was “according to the measure of the rule which God dealt to us, a measure to reach as far even as you.” There was no overstraining in the apostolic word or work, as though not reaching to the Corinthians; “for even as far as you we advanced in the gospel of Christ.” None could deny this. The apostle had traversed many lands, planting the standard and proclaiming the good news of Christ in them all. He had done so as far as Corinth to the joy of many hearts. Let others boast then of lengths without measure; he and those like-minded would not boast of anything of the sort, more especially if it were taking advantage of other men’s toils, which he was careful to avoid. “But having hope, while your faith increaseth, to be enlarged among you according to our rule unto abundance.”

Thus admirably does the apostle rise above the pettiness of human conceit or pride in divine things, nowhere more offensive than there, on the one hand laying bare those cheap pretensions which turned to selfish account the toil of others; on the other, cherishing confidence in the grace of God that the faith He had given would grow and thus afford him an opportunity of being enlarged as he says among them, instead of being chilled and straitened by having to deal with serious and growing evils. For thus would he be set free in fact and in spirit to preach the gospel unto the quarters beyond them, instead of boasting in another’s rule as to things made

ready. This his adversaries were doing, as we have seen, and as the apostle here says quietly, but none the less cuttingly.

But the Christian has a just ground of boasting There is One in whom we may and ought to boast, not self, but the Lord. So said the prophet of old, when the Jews were either glorying in idols or distrustful of Jehovah, who was laying bare their vanity and punishing their departure from Himself. So repeats the apostle now to the saints at Corinth. To glory in the Lord is due to Him and good for us; to glory elsewhere is a danger as well as a delusion. It connects more or less immediately with self; and not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.

2 Corinthians 11.

The apostle loved to spend himself in the service of Christ or the saints, and begrudged a word about himself even when the occasion demanded it, at least when it might look like self-defence. His wisdom as his joy was to testify of Christ. To speak of himself even as His servant he counts “folly,” however needful. But it is part of the enemy’s tactics to undermine and lower, and destroy if possible a true servant of the Lord, no less than to cry up those that serve their own belly and by their fair speech and speciousness deceive the hearts of the guileless. For can anything be more calculated to frustrate testimony to Christ than to blacken the bearer of it in his motives, ways, and aims? Hence, as thus the object of unceasing detraction to the saints at Corinth by self-seeking men who were really Satan’s instruments in dishonouring Christ and corrupting the church, the apostle addresses himself, however reluctantly, to the

necessary task of vindicating His name assailed in his own person and ministry.

“Would that ye might bear109 with me in some little110 folly;111 but even bear with me. For I am jealous as to you with a jealousy of God; for I betrothed you to one husband to present a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craft,112 your thoughts should be corrupted from the simplicity113 that is towards Christ. For if indeed he that cometh preacheth another Jesus whom we preached not, or ye receive a different spirit whom ye received not, or a different gospel which ye accepted not, ye might well bear with [it]. For I reckon that I am in nothing come short of those surpassingly apostles; but if even ordinary in speech, yet not in knowledge, but in every [way we were] made manifest [or, manifested it]114 in all things towards you. What! did I commit sin in humbling myself that ye might be exalted, because I gratuitously announced the gospel of God to you? Other churches I spoiled, receiving hire for service towards you. And when present with you and in want, I have not been a burden to any one (for my want the brethren on coming from Macedonia supplied); and in everything unburdensome to you I kept and will keep myself. There is Christ’s truth in me that this boasting shall not be stopped115 unto me in the quarters of Achaia. Wherefore? Because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do I will also do that I may cut off the occasion of those desiring an occasion, that wherein they boast they may be found even as we. For such [are] false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ: and no wonder,116 for Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light: [it is] no

great thing then if his servants also transform themselves as servants of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works." (Vers. 1-15.)

He apologises first of all for having to speak, not of Christ only, but of himself. Yet if any one might be jealous over the Corinthian saints, he surely who betrothed them (such is his expressive figure) to one husband, to present in them a chaste maiden to Christ. Such is the destiny of the saints; they are loved, washed, sanctified, justified, in view of this intimate relationship to Christ, which was most real and sure to the apostle, not so to those who lowered the standard of future hope and present separateness and conscious nearness in love and holiness to Christ by allowance of ease in this life, and of association with the world in its objects and ways, its philosophy or even religion. It is not only that here have we no continuing city and seek the coming one, but that we are now espoused to one husband even Christ, and are called to judge not conduct only but unsuitable thoughts and feelings. And as Paul had thus espoused the saints at Corinth, could he be otherwise than jealous at the creeping in of so much that was inconsistent with presenting them a chaste virgin to Christ?

For it was not merely failure through unwatchfulness: false principles were being instilled, and some relished the poison. So he continues, "I fear lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craft, your thoughts should be corrupted from the simplicity that is towards Christ." In proportion as Christ is a living person to the soul, the reality of Satan's counterworking will be owned. Insensibility to the wiles of the enemy as a true and active adversary to be resisted is the awful

indication of an unbelief common and growing in Christendom. How many Christians there are who think and talk slightingly enough of the Corinthian saints, themselves more lax still, not in ways only, but in faith! Satan is to them scarce more than an abstraction, an ideal expression of the power of evil. So far were those addressed, poor as they might be spiritually, from such incredulity, that the apostle could refer without hesitation to the serpent beguiling Eve. The history of the fall in Genesis was as yet indisputable truth to all who called on the name of the Lord; even the manner of the tempter's approach proved no difficulty, as it has to many a soul since, and this to their no small loss. Scripture recorded the simple, sober, solemn truth, which all heathenism attests in a traditional form more or less moulded into fable. And the latent enemy who employed the serpent is active still as ever, and now under Christianity is corrupting the thoughts of saints from the simplicity of the truth as to the Christ. For the merely professing mass the end will be the apostasy, and the man of sin revealed, whose coming is after the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish.

And what had they got to warrant slight or alienation? "For if indeed he that cometh preacheth another [ἄλλον] Jesus whom we preached not, or ye receive a different [ἕτερον] spirit which ye received not, or a different gospel which ye accepted not, ye might well bear with [it]." For none of these blessings were they indebted to any channel but the apostle; him they had lightly esteemed whilst ready to honour the self-exalting men who had set up to teach on his foundation, crying

up the twelve only to depreciate Paul. “For I reckon that I am in nothing come short of those surpassingly apostles; but if even ordinary in speech, yet not in knowledge, but in every way we manifested [it, or, were made manifest] in all things towards you.” They had all had the amplest experience of the apostle in everything; and as in power so in knowledge, they knew that he was behind none, unless it were in the rhetoric of the schools which the Greek mind overvalued.

But low-minded men misunderstand and despise that humility and love of which they are themselves incapable; and some there were at Corinth who cringed to position and means as they were insensible to the apostle’s grace in working with his own hands, or at least receiving no aid from rich Corinth. “Did I commit sin in humbling myself that ye might be exalted, because I gratuitously announced the gospel of God to you? Other churches I spoiled, receiving hire for service towards you. And when present with you and in want, I have not been a burden to any one (for my want the brethren on coming from Macedonia supplied); and in everything unburdensome to you I kept and will keep myself.” Ready to evangelise at all cost to himself everywhere, the apostle in some places felt free and happy to receive, not only from individuals but from assemblies, going on with God in grace and humility: when the world’s spirit prevailed, he was reserved and would receive nothing. The general principle remained intact: “the labourer is worthy of his hire;” “the Lord hath ordained that those that preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” But the apostle whilst laying down what is right could and did go beyond it in grace, not using it for himself but for Christ wherever His glory

called for it. From the poor Macedonian brethren he received; from the wealthy Corinthians nothing. O what a contrast is this day in Christendom! Nor did he thus speak to draw out their liberality in future, for as he had kept himself, so would he in future. “There is Christ’s truth in me that this boasting shall not be stopped unto me in the quarters of Achaia.” Was he disappointed and bitter now? “Wherefore? Because I love you not? God knoweth.” It was indeed to deny his uniform life in Corinth and since.

His true motive he explains. “But what I do I will also do that I may cut off the occasion of those desiring an occasion that wherein they boast they may be found even as we” — a cheap boast where men have plenty and need no self-denying devotedness. “For such [are] false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.” The beginning of those evil ways was then at work which soon formed a clerical class, dispensing even with the claims to gift from Christ under the fabulous pretension to apostolic succession. Such men then opposed the apostle in person, as now they oppose his doctrine. Is this wonderful, when. as the apostle reminds us, “Satan himself transformeth himself into an angel of light? It is no great thing therefore if his servants also transform themselves as servants of righteousness,” though he solemnly adds, their “end shall be according to their works.”

Having turned aside to warn of pseudo-apostles, their high pretensions, and their low realities, the apostle comes back again, reluctantly as we see, to speak of himself, his “folly” as he calls it. In truth no task could be to him more repulsive, for he loved to speak only of

Christ and the wondrous grace of God in Him. But what he so much disliked was a necessity; and at length the duty is faced of confronting their pretensions with his own reality. If in the previous chapter he shrank from pressing on the rich care for the poor saints, still more did he shrink now from self-vindication. But the Lord's glory was concerned and the saints were endangered; and so he again takes up the disagreeable task.

"Again I say, let not one think me to be a fool; but if otherwise, even as a fool receive me, that I also may boast some little. What I speak, I speak not according to the Lord but as in folly, in this confidence of boasting. Since many boast according to flesh, I also will boast, For ye bear fools pleasantly, being wise. For ye bear if one bring you into bondage, if one devour you, if one receive, if one exalt himself, if one bout you on the face. As to dishonour I speak, as though we had been weak; but wherein any one is bold (I speak in folly) I also am bold." (Vers. 16-21.)

It was impossible to treat the assailed ministry of Christ without speaking of himself and his service; and of these how could he speak to unfriendly ears without apparent boasting? So we have effort and apology and circuitous approach, all characteristic of the man, but the work done thoroughly and the word of God dealing with their consciences. Boasting was certainly not the way of the Lord; boasting in the Lord is what becomes every believer; and the apostle shrank perhaps more sensitively than any other man from boasting in aught else. But the false apostles were dishonouring the Lord and damaging the saints by putting forward their fleshly advantages; such as a fine personal presence, power of mind, play of fancy, readiness of speech, rhetorical

artifices, independent fortune, family connection, social position, and the like. Therefore does he feel it necessary to put forward what God had wrought according to the ability He bestowed; and this not merely in positive spiritual power, but in every kind of labour and suffering for the Lord's sake. It is humbling yet instructive to contrast the apostle's pain at having thus to speak, and the too evident pleasure with which many a servant of Christ goes off into personal narratives, which seem to have no aim but to prove his own cleverness at the expense of poor Mr. This or Mr. That, the great sacrifices he has made for the truth, or the surpassing excellence of his line of things in the testimony of Christ. Indeed it is well in these days of fleshly pretension, which claims high and exclusive spirituality, if our ears escape the deliberate effort to lower such as are resolved by grace to exalt Christ only and to love all that are His, abominating therefore all party-work, whether in leaders or in followers.

Still, he is instinctively averse to everything which might look like self-exaltation, and which necessarily involved speaking of himself or of his work. He deprecates their thinking him a fool; but if they would not concede this to him, "Receive me even as a fool, that I too may boast some little." They, being deceitful workers, sought their own glory; the apostle wrote only to deliver the saints from that which undermined the Lord and puffed up the flesh. Nevertheless it was not Christ; and not to be wholly occupied with Him was distasteful. "That which I speak, I speak not after the Lord, but as in folly, in this confidence of boasting." He had ample matter and real substance; still it was not directly the Lord, and this tried him, however necessary it might be. This seems to

be the true meaning; not at all that he was writing as an uninspired man, but that, by inspiration, he was writing what was painful to a heart wholly devoted to the Lord's glory, but indignant at the trickery of these spurious ministers, and at the ready ear given to their insinuations by many of the saints. And certainly the Corinthians who permitted and enjoyed the lofty talk of those who detracted from Paul had no right to complain of the rapid glance at his work and sufferings, as well as power and office.

"Since many boast according to flesh, I also will boast, for ye bear with fools pleasantly, being wise." The false teachers without scruple flattered the saints, as they flattered themselves. The irony of the apostle is the most cutting reproof of self-complacency. Where the folly really lay was neither doubtful, nor far to seek. He who has Christ for his wisdom can afford to be counted, and to count himself, a fool; it is really the truest wisdom, which they wholly miss, who exalt a favourite teacher into the place of Christ, and claim the character of obedience for such abject and perilous folly. Among the Jews, to say "there is no God" was to be a fool, in the worst sense of the word; among Christians, to set the servant practically above the Master, to give the servant the homage due only to Him, is real folly, and commonly as at Corinth it is the acceptance of Satan's ministers to the disparagement of those who are truly serving Christ.

Nor can any sight be more remarkable than the way in which flesh displays itself in these circumstances. The same saints, who were restive under the authority of a true apostle, were all submission to those who were false. "For ye bear if one bring you into bondage, if one devour you, if one capture, if one exalt himself, if one

beat you on the face." Such was the degradation into which many at Corinth had fallen, hugging the chains which they saw not; for flesh is blind as well as foolish, and loves its own things, not those of Jesus Christ. It likes a director of faith and duty — not conscience in God's presence, subject to the word. It submits to bondage to man, if it be allowed sometimes licence. It never really knows and enjoys liberty in the Spirit. It ignores and endures wrongs, through indulgence to its favourites, to the last degree of injury and insult, as if all this were a high degree of religious merit, instead of the lack of faith and power which must bow down to a human priest or pontiff. The history of Christendom is but the filling up of the sketch the apostle has drawn of what Satan had wrought to a certain extent at Corinth.

Now at length the apostle comes once again, however slowly, to himself and his ministry. "As to dishonour I speak as though we had been weak, but, wherein any one is bold (I speak in folly), I also am bold." It was the apostle's glory to be weak that the power of Christ might rest upon him. This his adversaries turned to his reproach, and he bowed to it; he was far from affecting that high spirit which imposes on the vulgar used to it in the world, and is ever of price to the fleshly mind. But he apologises for speaking folly, and he adds, "wherein any one is bold, I also am bold." He was pained and ashamed to allude to his own things, however true and blessed; whilst they blazoned with the utmost vanity their advantages, however petty or really despicable in comparison.

The fleshly pretension of those who opposed the apostle prided itself on its Jewish extraction, as clericalism and ecclesiastical corruptions are apt to do virtually if not

naturally as here. Knowing that the apostle turned every eye to Christ in heaven as dead and risen, they seem to have forgotten how easily he could dispose of such claims to superiority. “Are they Hebrews? I too. Are they Israelites? I too. Are they Abraham’s seed? I too.” (Ver. 22.) It is a climax from the external designation of the chosen nation, through the internal name (clearly enough distinguished in such scriptures as 1 Sam. 13:3-7, 19, 20; 1 Sam. 14:21-24), to the name in virtue of which they inherited the promises; yet each appropriated to himself with a curtness very galling to his vain-glorious rivals. It was low ground in comparison of Christ, and the apostle treating it with scant respect turns to a higher claim.

“Are they ministers of Christ? (Beside myself I speak) I above measure;117 in labours very abundantly, in prisons very abundantly,118 in stripes exceedingly, in deaths often. From Jews five times I received forty [stripes] save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; by wayfarings often, by dangers of rivers, by dangers of robbers, by dangers from countrymen, by dangers from Gentiles, by dangers in town, by dangers in desert, by dangers at sea, by dangers among false brethren, by119 toil and trouble; in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Apart from things without [or, besides], my pressing care120 day by day, the concern for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I burn not? If I must boast, I will boast in the matters of my infirmity. The God121 and Father of the Lord Jesus, he that is blessed for ever, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the ethnarch [or,

prefect] of Aretas the king garrisoned the Damascenes' city122 to seize me; and through a window I was let down in a basket by the wall and escaped his hands." (Vers. 23-33.)

It is hardly exposition that is needed here, but thanksgiving for the grace bestowed of God on a man of like passions with ourselves, when the eye surveys such a roll of suffering labour for Christ, when the heart seeks to realise what it actually means so to be poured out as a libation, as he says to Philippi, where he could rejoice and rejoice in common with all the saints, not as here where the folly of the Corinthians wrung out of an outraged heart the reluctant tale, so profitable for us and all, which we should never otherwise have had recounted. We may well be humbled as we read that which puts our lukewarmness to shame.

Nevertheless, though the summary is as brief as it is plain in the main, the wounded modesty of the apostle, forced to withdraw the veil from a life of unequalled suffering, enters on the task with apologetic words which let out the pain it cost him to speak of his own things. He puts the question as to his adversaries, "Are they ministers of Christ?" and answers, not now as a fool (ἄφρων) but as raving, "I above measure." The, commentators, ancient and modern, will have it to be a comparison. This is the very thing be seems studiously to avoid by the use of the preposition used adverbially and by other means afterwards. It is impossible to conceive an answer more spiritually wise and conclusive. For he does not even notice here the extraordinary power which the Lord had given him in the Spirit to deal with disease, death, or demons; nor yet the immense range and success of his work in the

gospel; but he turns from his very abundant labours to the excess of stripes which had befallen him, his very abundant imprisonments, and his frequent exposures to death. Those who sought to undermine him might boast of their learning or their originality, their logic or their imagination, their depth of thought or their piquancy of illustration. They might appeal to their adherents numerous or intelligent, to their high favour with women, to their popularity with men; for they sought above all to draw away the disciples after them. What did they care for the poor and despised? What for the interests of Christ and the church?

The phraseology of the apostle (as in

ὑπὲρ ἐγώ, and also the sense of

παρεκτός) may be now and then difficult to seize or convey from the brevity and abruptness of one who could not bear to dwell on such a theme in view of unworthy adversaries who stood high in the esteem of many a saint. But he assuredly does not mean that any service here was more than the ministry of Christ, for this to him was the highest glory; and the Lord Himself had said that whosoever would be great among them should be their minister, and whosoever would be first should be slave of all. Nor would he merely intimate that he was more devoted and laborious than his detractors, as some have supposed. He was really comparing himself with none; but apologising for so speaking as contrary to a sound mind, he could not but own himself Christ’s minister beyond measure. No doubt the comparative occurs both with “labours” and with “prisons,” and even Bengel thought the false apostles experienced these like Paul, but less. But it was

overlooked that the Greek tongue often uses the comparative without any object of comparison in a merely intensitive sense,123 where we should employ the positive qualified by “very,” “rather” or the like, meaning (if we attempted to fill up the ellipsis) “more than usual,” or “ordinary,” etc.; and the context confirms this as well as the moral bearing. For μᾶλλον or πλέον would have been more natural to express comparative superiority, while ὑπερβαλλόντως and πολλάκις just afterwards oppose the idea. We see in 2 Corinthians 10:12 what the apostle felt of comparing, which was their way, not his who was altogether above a habit so far beneath Christ or the Christian.

The apostle next glances at particulars thus far in his course, to which others had compelled him who can have little anticipated such an answer to their vain-glory. He puts them to shame with (not miracles but) sufferings. “From Jews five times I received forty [stripes] save one, thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and day I have been in the deep.” This last danger was of course, like the three shipwrecks, previous to that which is so graphically described in Acts 27, though Grotius by a singular oversight speaks of it as if included. The one stoning at Lystra is related in Acts 14. Paley notices the remarkable accuracy of the inspired historian as compared with the apostle’s statement. There is the nearest approach to a seeming contradiction without giving the least real ground for it. The same chapter which gives the case of stoning mentions at the beginning that an assault was made on Paul and Barnabas at Iconium, “to use them despitefully and to stone them; but they were ware of it and fled unto

Lystra and Derbe." "Now had the assault been completed; had the history related that a stone was thrown, as it relates that preparations were made by Jews and Gentiles to stone Paul and his companions; or even had the account of this transaction stopped, without going on to inform us that Paul and his companions were aware of their danger and fled, a contradiction between the history and the apostle would have ceased. Truth is necessarily consistent; but it is scarcely possible that independent accounts, not having truth to guide them, should thus advance to the very brink of contradiction without falling into it." (Horae Paulinae. Works, v. 120, 121, ed. vii.) In the Acts we have but one of the three beatings with rods, and not one of the five scourgings by Jews.

And what a picture of ceaseless, unselfish, suffering toils is despatched in the next few words, before which the great deeds of earth's heroes grow pale with ineffectual light, attended as they were with heavy blows on others and clever schemes to screen themselves! "By wayfarings often, by dangers of rivers, by dangers of robbers, by dangers from countrymen, by dangers from Gentiles, by dangers in towns, by dangers in desert, by dangers at sea, by dangers among false brethren, by toil and trouble; in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." Yet this is the man who deprecates it as "folly" to speak of himself, who practised as he exhorted "but one thing!" "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Forget his failures, his sins, he did not; it is good and wholesome both for self-judgment and as a

witness of sovereign grace and faithfulness on God’s part. But his progress, his trials, his sufferings, others only by their folly constrained him to recall, in meekness setting right those who opposed, if God per. adventure might sometime give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.

Yet it is not only the endurance of cruel usage from time to time from open enemies that tests the heart; it is shown out yet more by the unwearied and constant going out, no matter what the labour and the danger, from country to country among strangers whom the Jews could readily influence when they themselves took fire at the gospel, added to the manifold trials of the way. “in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from countrymen, in perils from heathen, in perils in town, in perils in desert, in perils at sea, in perils among false brethren; in toil and trouble, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.” How poor the lengthy tales of the most devoted labourers in ancient or modern times compared with these living strokes from the heart of the great apostle!

Nor was it by any means an exhaustive account. Apart from the things besides” (παρεκτός, possibly without,” as in the Vulgate, Calvin, Beza, Authorised Version, etc.), “the pressure on me day by day, the concern for all the churches.” There is little doubt that an early confusion crept into the text, and that the true word here is one signifying “urgent attention,” as in Acts 24:12 it is rather one signifying “faction” or “tumultuous concourse,” though the more ancient copies support the former word (ἐπίστασις, not ἐπισύσταις) in both; and they are followed in this by Lachmann, Tischendorf,

Alford, and Tregelles. Mr. T. S. Green is one of those who fall into the opposite extreme of reading the latter word in both. It is one of the few instances where Scholz has in my opinion shown better judgment, reading “concourse” (ἐπισύσατσιν) in Acts and “pressure of attention” (

ἐπίστασις) in the passage before us. Anxiety for all the assemblies is the appended explanation of that care day by day which pressed on the apostle. And of this he gives us a sample. “Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is stumbled, and I [emphatic] burn not?” If they were sorely troubled by scrupulosity, he could and did enter into their difficulties; if any one was stumbled by the unworthy bearing of others, his soul was on fire, filled with love for Christ and the saints, and abhorring selfishness and party with thorough hatred.

Was this self-praise? “If it is needful to boast, I will boast of the matters of my infirmity. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, who is blessed for ever, knoweth that I lie not. At Damascus the prefect of Aretas the king garrisoned the Damascenes’ city to seize me; and through a window in a basket was I let down by [or through] the wall, and escaped their hands.” No doubt, it was a remarkable escape at the beginning of his ministry; but it was just the last thing one who sought his own glory would have repeated and recorded for ever. No angelic visitors opened the bars and bolts of massive doors, nor blinded the eyes of the garrison: the apostle was let down in a basket through a window in the city wall. Truly he gloried, not in the great deeds or sayings of his ministry, but in his weakness and the Lord’s grace. It is the more remarkable from the way in

which he proceeds immediately after to speak of his being caught up to the third heaven.

93 The common T.R. reading

ὁ ἐξ ὑμ. is largely supported, but not by the best MSS, etc., and may be taken as “zeal on your part.”

94 T.R., with several uncials and most cursives, etc., adds τῆς καυχήσεως “of boasting.”

95 προεπηγ. has much the best support, not as in T. R.

προκατηγ.

96 ὡς the best MSS, not

ὥσπερ as T.R. with a few cursives.

97 T. R. has the present, “purposeth,” with most, but the oldest read the perfect.

98 It is the dative which admits of all these shades, of which it is not easy to decide which is best.

99 The Latins and some of the Greeks took this as an exhortation, not as a question. Others understand it indicatively.

100 Sundry copies as Dp.m. Ep.m. F.G., etc., add

δοῦλος, “bondman.”

101

ἐφ᾽ ἑ. B. L., etc.,

ἀφ᾽ ἑ. almost all others with Greek fathers. Lachmann originally inclined to the first, afterwards to the last.

102 Most cursives with a few uncials support

Χριστοῦ, “of Christ,” as in the Text. Rec.

103

τε even is omitted by B F G, etc., as

καί is by the best MS and most versions. A few also read, “I shall boast.”

104

ἡμῖν “to us” Text. Rec., is not in the oldest copies.

105 B with the Latin copies give “they say,” and so Lachmann, though Tischendorf says that he omits it.

106 The critics strangely differ, as do the copies, in the last phrase, not only as to form, but as to arrangement. The renderings proposed singularly differ also.

107 The singular is in D F G, and in several Latin copies.

108 Lachmann strangely follows the Vatican (B), etc., in omitting the first and objective negative, which necessitates an interrogative force “For do we overstretch,” etc.

109 Steph. with the most and best,

ἀνείχ. Elz.

ἠνείχ. but, rightly

μικρόν τι (for

τι Steph.) and

ἀφοσύνης (though wrongly

τῆς).

110 Ibid.

111 Ibid.

112

οὕτω is added by the Text. Rec. with many witnesses, but not B D F G P, etc.; καὶ τῆς ἁγνότητος added by m B F G, etc, and so Lachmann and Alford.

113 Ibid.

114

φανερώσαντες p.m. B Fgr G, etc.

φανερωθέντες corr. Dcorr. E H L P, etc.

φανερωθείς Dp.m. etc.

115

σφραγί. the error of a few cursives with Steph.; Elz. has rightly φραγήσεται.

116

θαῦμα B D F G P R, etc. for

θαυμαστόν of Text. Rec. supported by most later copies.

117 Lachmann gives

ὑπερεγώ: it is hard to say why.

118 Lachmann and Treg. follow B D E, etc.

φυλ. περ. ἐν

πλ. ὑπ.; Tisch. prefers p.m. Fgr. G, etc.

πλ. περ. ἐν

φυλ. ὑπ.

119 Text. Rec. adds

ἐν with the later uncials, cursives, Vulg., etc.; but p.m. B D E F G and Gothic do not read the preposition.

120

ἐπίστασις B E F G, several cursives, etc.;

ἐπισύστασις Text. Rec. supported by most of the later uncials and cursives, apparently also by the Greek and Latin expositors. The more ancient copies give μοι instead of the vulgar μου.

121 Verse 31 has been strangely tampered with by copyists. Thus the Clermont and St. Germain's (now St. Pet.) MSS. to ὁ θεὸς add τοῦ

Ἰσραήλ. Again they and two other uncials with very many cursives add ἡμῶν to τ. κυρίου, as still more add Χριστοῦ to Ἰησοῦ.

122 The more ancient copies read

π. Δαμ. rather than

Δαμ. π. and have no

θέλων as in Text. Rec.

123 Winer (Gr. N.T. Gr. iii. § 35, Moulton's ed.) seems to deny this, so far as the N.T. is concerned; but hardy assertion is no proof. I do not say that it is ever used for the positive; nor would the superlative suit, but just what is found. Were there only the two comparatives employed, it would be strange to depart from the literal meaning "more abundantly." But as the context stands before and after, and taking account of the moral considerations, as well as the delicate dignity of the apostle, I incline to the version given as. preferable.

2 Corinthians 12-13

2 Corinthians 12

We have had the apostle glorying in what had no glory in men's eyes. Now he turns abruptly, from being let down in a basket to escape a Gentile governor, to being caught up to heaven for a vision of the Lord in paradise.

"I must needs boast, though not profitable; but I will come124 unto visions and revelations or [the] Lord. I know a man in Christ fourteen years ago (whether in [the] body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not: God knoweth), such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in [the] body or without125 [or apart from] the body, I know not: God knoweth), how that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which [it is] not lawful for a man to utter. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on mine own behalf I will not boast save in [my] weaknesses. For if I should desire to boast, I shall not be foolish, for I shall speak truth; but I forbear, lest any should account as to me above that which he seeth me or heareth126 of me." (Vers. 1-6.)

The text is, from the conflict of readings, rather precarious. But the truth conveyed runs like a ploughshare through all fleshly thought and feeling. Certainly in the boast of the apostle is not one thing palatable to nature, or exalting to himself or of profit humanly. Grace alone characterises visions and revelations of the Lord, and to these he would come. Yet even though boast one must in the Lord, room for vain glory is excluded. "I know a man in Christ:" not "I

knew," as the Authorised Version so strangely misunderstands. Still even in the form which the apostle employs to convey the former, personal boasting is sedulously avoided, so much so that even our translators appear to have conceived that he was speaking not of himself but of some other man.

How blessedly Christ meets self in its need and guilt and ruin in order to deliver from its power, not only by the judgment of the first man, but by identification with the Second! It is good to be indebted to another's grace: what is to be thus lost, if one may so say, in the blessedness of Christ? Undoubtedly Paul had the marvellous experience he so vividly alludes to; but he puts it in a way meant to convey to any "man in Christ" that it is his privilege substantially, as it was his own in fact miraculously. In 2 Corinthians 5 we were told that, if any man is in Christ, it is a new creation: the old things passed, all things made new, and all of the God who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ. Here it is one caught up to the third heaven and in paradise hearing what it is not possible or permissible for man to tell unspeakable words. The sphere he was introduced into, though the communications were beyond what could be conveyed now; but it was of great moment to have the certainty of all. And he whose province it was to make known the counsels of God as to Christ and His own for heaven was thus allowed to hear, that all in Christ should know their portion by such a chosen witness.

The entire allusion is as peculiar as wise and suited. "I know a man in Christ fourteen years ago." Faith does not boast of visions and revelations of the Lord, any more than of its doings: of trials and sufferings one may speak if compelled, and so too of that which appertains

to every man in Christ, though one alone got the vision. So David said not a word about the lion and the bear which he was enabled to kill while engaged in his lowly task, till it was needful to allay the fears of others to God's glory; and the apostle only spoke many years after a wondrous experience which others less spiritual would have talked of everywhere for as many years or more. What would not the Corinthians or their misleaders have made of it?

Prophets of old have known what it is to look on scenes outside man's experience. So Isaiah, the year in which king Uzziah died, beheld the Lord on His throne with the Seraphim in attendance on His glory, that he might fittingly to the people bear witness of their evil but of the virgin — born Jehovah-Messiah who should establish the kingdom and deliver the people from their sins to God's glory. Ezekiel too was lifted up between earth and heaven and transported to Jerusalem in the visions of God and the temple (Ezek. 8 - 11), as afterwards to Chaldea (ver. 24), and finally to the land of Israel (Ezek. 40 - 48) for the future temple and city and division of the land. Nor is it only in the great Apocalyptic prophecy of the New Testament that we trace the analogy of these ways of the Spirit, but we see His power in catching away Philip bodily to Azotus or Ashdod, from the neighbourhood, one of the roads leading from Jerusalem to Gaza. As for the apostle, he says "(whether [in the] body, I know not; or whether out of the body, I know not: God knoweth), such an one caught up to the third heaven." It was not dubious, but transcendent, knowledge; and God who gave it hid from the apostle whether it was in spirit only or in bodily presence also. Certainly, if caught up like Philip, there was left such a

sense of the glory as was too deep and bright for human words or for present circumstances. Body there or not, he was not hindered from feeling the glory to be beyond the measure of man. There the glorified will be to enjoy all with Christ at His coming, in bodies like His own; and there the disembodied saint goes to be with Him; there too Paul as a man in Christ, but Paul actually as apostle and prophet that we might learn now, was taken up. "And I know such a man (whether in [the] body or apart from the body, I know not: God knoweth), how that he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which [it is] not lawful for a man to utter." In the mysteries of the old heathen there were "unspeakable words," but they were strange forms of language to alarm and overawe the mind. Here the things forbade communication as rising completely in their nature above all that surrounds or is natural to us.

But the apostle does boast, not exactly "of" nor "in" but" on behalf of such a one." God did not deal thus with His servant for no reason but worthily for Himself: and Paul was led by the Spirit in speaking of it fourteen years after the fact to meet the exigencies of the testimony of Christ. It was grace to give the privilege; it was grace not to boast of it for himself meanwhile; it was grace to write of it now, and to write it in the inspired word for all saints in all time. "On behalf of such an one I will boast, but on mine own behalf I will not boast save in my weaknesses." These we have had in the preceding chapter; they were the suffering of love for Christ's sake in a weak body with all men and things opposed, which Satan was ever skilfully arraying against him. How beautiful are the feet of such heralds of good things! Yet philosophy and religion saw only what was despicable,

as in the Master, so in the servant. Do we know what it is to live beyond the depreciation of our fellows? Let us look to it, however, that it be truly for Christ and His glory in those that are His. Nothing is more opposed to Christ, yet nothing more common among Christians than a pretentious self-asserting spirit, which will boast of the distinctive possession of the truth which we know, even though it most condemn us. God looks for reality in a world of shadows and untruth; He looks for the possession and reflection of His revealed light and truth where darkness reigns; He looks for divine love where only self is found, though in subtle forms; He looks for the faith which reckons on Him according to His word in the face of all difficulties and dangers. Assuredly the apostle thus lived and laboured: as it is for our profit to see in these two epistles how misunderstood is such a path even among saints, who are apt to welcome a high and self-exalting spirit, even though it indulge in sufficiently contumelious ways towards themselves. So the Israelites, who would have a king like the nations, received one after their own heart, who served himself, instead of ruling them in the fear of the Lord, “For if I should desire to boast, I shall not be foolish, for I shall speak truth; but I forbear, lost any should account of me above that which he seeth me or beareth of me.” The servant was jealous of his Master’s glory, and hence his reticence as to much which would have interested us in the highest degree. “To me,” he could say as none other since nor then nor before “To me to live is Christ;” and he was as vigilant as to this in public ministry as in private walk. “On behalf of a man in Christ” he had much to say, as he does say it elsewhere; and so he boasts here, for here all is of grace. “Who maketh thee to differ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?

Now if thou didst receive, why dost thou glory as if thou didst not receive?" But even here, though speaking truth only, he forbears lest any should account of him beyond what he sees or hears of him. Such is the effect of a life spent in the faith of Christ and His love.

We have seen the spiritual power and tact with which the apostle handles his glorying, how he blends "the man in Christ" with that which was peculiar to himself, so as to out of all self or fleshly boasting, and yet to afford every saint intelligent of his privileges the same conscious privilege substantially as he had himself received miraculously. Now he turns to that counterpoise which the wisdom of the Lord had bound up with his own experience in order to hinder the misuse of it; for flesh was as bad in the apostle as in any other, and it needed His dealing no less than in the Corinthians, though differently as to form.

"And that I should not be uplifted by the exceeding greatness of the revelations,127 there was given to me a thorn [or stake] for the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I might not be uplifted overmuch.128 For this I thrice besought the Lord that it might depart from me; and he hath said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for [my]129 power is perfected in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest on me Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in straits for Christ; for when I am weak, then am I strong." (Vers. 7-10.)

Here at least is no ambiguity, no studied mysteriousness of mention. Paul boasts of nothing here below but in his weaknesses, and indeed specifies one especial trial, or

thorn if not “stake” for the flesh, sent to make nothing of him in the eyes of others, rendering him contemptible, it would seem from elsewhere in his preaching. With this goes an extraordinary irregularity in the very expression which it is easier to paraphrase than to translate with any smoothness, if we adopt with some διό “wherefore” after “revelations” and before “that.”

This the Revisers deal with ingeniously: “And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations — wherefore, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given,” etc. Otherwise, accepting the word, Lachmann was driven to make verse 6 a parenthesis, and to connect the first clause of verse 7 with the end of verse 5; and then the new sentence began with διὸ ἵνα μὴ κ.τ.λ. which of course, if all allowed, yields a simple sense. In the text of Tregelles the insertion is beyond measure harsh. Alford brackets the word, and very oddly the last clause also, though repeatedly affirming its propriety for emphasis or solemnity; Tischendorf rejects it.

It will be observed that in the early part of the chapter the allusion is to what was communion with God’s presence, not matter for communication to His children; and in that communion the body had no part. What he saw and heard was so outside its sphere that he knows not whether he were in the body or out of it. A man in Christ thus favoured he knows, but whether in the body or apart from the body he knows not. Could anything make him feel more distinctly that all the power to enjoy is in God?

Yet flesh even in a saint might work in consequence and whisper that none before had over been so caught up to

the third heaven. Hence, lest by the excess of the revelations he should be uplifted, there was given him what was alike painful and humbling. What the thorn in the flesh was in Paul's case is purposely left undetermined, even if one may gather more or less its nature; but its moral aim, its intended effect, cannot be doubted. Nor is the measure of reticence without a wise motive, for it is a general principle of divine dealing with a form suited to each person so dealt with. If we hear of a messenger of Satan on one side, we hear of something given on the other. If the enemy take pleasure in the pain of God's servant or child, He assuredly works even by that which so distresses the flesh for the deeper blessing of the soul.

Lessons previously not learnt at all or imperfectly are now taught. "For this I thrice besought the Lord that it might depart from me; and he hath said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee; for [my] power is perfected in weakness." (Vers. 8, 9.) How it reminds us of what was still more wonderful, yea of absolute perfection, in that very Lord Himself when He prayed thrice that, if the Father would, the cup might pass from Him. Here it could not, ought not, to have been otherwise; for how could He who knew His love as the Son but deprecate unsparing judgment because of sin? The Lord, in that infinite suffering according to God's will and in doing it, was alone necessarily: but in the case before us we have as a principle what pertains to us and must be our position by grace, if indeed we are to be kept from the more humbling lesson of what the flesh is by a positive fall like Peter's. There are exceeding precious privileges given to the Christian. And it is not in the soul's entrance into or enjoyment of them that the danger lies,

but in our natural reflection on their possession afterwards. Hence God knows how to use in grace what Satan means for hurt as in Job's case. Only here it is far deeper and more triumphant, as it ought to be now that Christ is come and redemption accomplished. It is not only dependence on God exercised and maintained, nor is it mere resignation to inevitable trial, but the sufficiency of grace practically proved, and Christ's power perfected in weakness.

Thus he who felt as soberly and profoundly as any man ever did can say, "Most gladly therefore will I rather boast in my weakness, that the power of Christ may spread its tabernacle over me." This is incalculably more than vanquishing mighty foes by faith and patience. It is taking pleasure in what is most trying and overwhelming to nature that Christ's strength may be manifested. Where flesh might rise, it is put down. In such dealing with us is the life of the Spirit; but Christ makes the bitter sweet, and His power can make its dwelling in us when we acquiesce in our nothingness and rejoice in it if it be but to His praise and glory. Practically there is nothing so profitable for the soul; and the apostle was ministering in the most effectual way while thus drawing forth from his own deep experience the true glorying of the saint as he knew it in his life before God and His ways with him day by day. What did they know of it, who were boasting of themselves or their leaders at Corinth and depreciating the true path of Christ to which the apostle clave faithfully? They would willingly have persuaded themselves into the idea that such devotedness and suffering were but the eccentricities of an ill-balanced mind, and a prejudice to the gospel rather than a true and acceptable testimony to Christ.

But, bear or forbear, he will tell them and us undauntedly what it is to live Christ. “Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in insults, in necessities, in persecutions, in straits for Christ; for when I am weak, then am I strong.” Practical Christianity is as truly of faith as deliverance. All is of grace, though the ways differ. In every respect Christ is all. Only in redemption He suffered for us; in the path of faith we suffer with and it may be for Him. And blessed are those who thus suffer now, whether for righteousness’ sake or for His name.

But was not the apostle speaking of himself, of what grace had given him to suffer? Was it not talking of what he calls weaknesses, insults, necessities, persecutions and straits for Christ, but on his own part?

“I am become foolish,130 ye compelled me; for I ought to have been commended by you, for in nothing was I behind those surpassingly apostles if also I am nothing. The signs indeed of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by both signs131 and wonders and powers. For what is there wherein ye were made inferior to the other assemblies, unless that I myself pressed not heavily on you? Forgive me this wrong.” (Vers. 11-13.)

It is not irony, but the genuine and deep feeling of one whose heart burned with a divinely given sense of what Christ is, and of love to the saints, forced to speak of himself by those who should have been prompt rather to have vindicated him and his service in love. It was the more painful, because he is treating, not of sin in man met by the righteousness of God in Christ, but of utter weakness in the Christian displaced by the strength of Christ. Even the saints in Corinth were as to this on

ground like the world, the heathen world around them. They gloried in. intellect, in learning, in eloquence — briefly in man. They had never applied the cross of Christ practically to judge it, save so far as grace may have begun the work by the first epistle; and we need His glory on high, as this second epistle shows, to deal with fleshly pretensions thoroughly. (Cf. 2 Cor. 4, 2 Cor. 5) The weakness which some detractors laid to his reproach he was so far from denying that he himself insisted on it as the condition of the display of Christ's power.

It was real and culpable ignorance therefore to contrast him with those surpassingly apostles in this respect. Rather was it true that in nothing was he behind them, though as he says he was nothing, and quite content to be so. What his heart yearned for was Christ's glory, Christ's strength, not his own. As later in Philippians 3 his desire was to be found in Him, not having a righteousness of his own, that which is of the law, 'but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith; so here he would not be strong in himself if he could, but weak that he might be strong through Christ. He would glory of a man in Christ, but in himself of nothing but his infirmities.

Natural power indeed is as offensive in the service of Christ as is one's own righteousness in justification: the latter denies Christ for us, the former denies Christ in us, or rather His power resting on us in our own felt weakness, yea, nothingness. Nothing can be more opposed to the feeling and the reasoning of flesh and blood. Human nature dislikes what is humiliating and painful; it loves ease or honour. To go on in difficulties, dependent on nothing but the Lord, is most trying, not

delivered but enduring, that He may be glorified and we may prove the sufficiency of His grace. Such is the true pathway of power, and Paul trod it as none other since, in whom the first man is apt to be strong, the confusion or perplexities of others being only the greater where the Second man seems also strong, and the consequence serious for those who accept the activity of the two Adams as the right and desirable thing, to be admired in the Christian and the service of Christ. How different was his experience who took pleasure in all that made him for Christ's sake despised before others, and crushed in himself — when weak then strong!

Yet had he far rather have not said a word of himself, even when speaking only of this suffering trying path, and absolutely silent as to himself, his family, his acquirements, or his doings. It was the Corinthians who compelled him to speak out for their own profit, even though it took the shape of reproof. Neither was Paul behind the apostles, however exalted any might be; and none the less but the more, though (and because) he was nothing; nor were the Corinthians inferior to the assemblies, save in Paul being no burden to them. And as he shows that the apostolic signs were wrought among them in all patience by both signs and wonders and powers, so he asks them to forgive him the wrong of never accepting support or favours from that rich assembly. It is calm, dignified, loving but overwhelming, in its exposure and reprimand of their fleshly conceit, as well as of their readiness to take up insinuations against him whom they ought rather to have defended when impugned.

"Behold, this132 third time I am ready to come unto you, and I will not press heavily,133 for I seek not yours but

you; for the children ought not to lay up for the parents but the parents for the children. And I most gladly will spend and be spent for your souls, if even134 more abundantly loving135 you I am less loved." (Vers. 14, 15.)

The servant would still (if now at length he revisited Corinth) cherish the portion of his Master, and give rather than receive: though entitled to live of the gospel and be cared for by the assembly, he would forego his title in the midst of those who might misuse or misunderstand it to Christ's dishonour. He would be like a parent in unselfish affection to his children. He would fare as He whose love was the more as others hated, however pained to find the saints so like the world. How singularly close was Paul's "imitation" of Christ!

"But be it so: I did not myself burden you, but crafty as I am I caught you with guile. Did I make a gain of any of them whom I sent unto you? I exhorted Titus and sent the brother with [him]: did Titus make any gain of you? Walked they not in the same spirit? [and] not in the same steps?" (Vers. 16-18.)

Here the apostle obviates the cunningly mischievous insinuation of any who might charge him with reaping advantage indirectly through his friends. Such dishonour he repudiates. Guile like that was far from his soul, though the accusers seemed by no means above it if they suspected him; for what will not malice in the heart dare to think and say? They well knew that Titus and his companion walked in their midst with a self-abnegation kindred to his own. No wonder this unwearied witness of Christ's glory abhorred from the bottom of his heart the sickening compulsion which

drew forth such words from his pen; but we should profit by it all no less than those primarily addressed. There are many saints like those in Corinth: where the servant like him who thus pleads for Christ and like Christ?

Nothing can be conceived more untrue than the impressions which the Corinthians had received of the one to whom they were so deeply indebted; and this from the rivalry of men who boasted much, and as usual with little or nothing really to boast. So it was even in these early days, so often halcyon days in superficial estimation, unless indeed for eyes yet more superficial, which, misled by theory only, look for progress in Christendom, degrading the past to exalt the present and speculate on the future. Positive and weighty and even notorious facts were utterly opposed to the misrepresentation of his adversaries; and none ought to have known better than the Corinthians how unfounded was all this detraction. It would be unintelligible if one did not know the natural weakness of the mass to fall under high-sounding words, and the subtle activity of the enemy to take advantage of the flesh in order to ruin the church and make it an instrument to the Lord's shame, instead of a witness in grace to His glory. Therefore did the apostle stoop to refute this miserable trash. But he was jealous lest this too should be misinterpreted, and he next proceeds to guard even this brief notice of his slanderers.

Ye long ago[136] think that we excuse ourselves to you. Before[137] God in Christ we speak, but all things, beloved, for your building up. For I fear lest by any means on coming I find you not such as I wish, and I be found by [or for] you such as ye wish not; lest by any

means [there be] strife,138 jealousy, wraths, feuds, slanderings, whisperings, swellings, confusions; lest on my coming again my God humble me among [or before] you, and bewail many of those that have sinned heretofore and not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and indecency which they committed." (Vers. 19-21.)

There need be no question, I think, as to the reading in verse 19. It is not "again" as in the Authorised Version, but "this long time," which does not suit the interrogative form. If others sought self-justification, not so the apostle, whatever their surmisings. For those who are not occupied with Christ readily conceive of others what fills their own minds. He whom they misjudged turns to the presence of God and in His sight speaks in Christ. His speech was not only in the consciousness of the divine presence, but characterised by Christ, not by the natural man. In His name does not seem the thought, nor yet conformably to His doctrine. He stood consciously over against the highest tribunal, and spoke in Christ accordingly, not in the flesh; as he thus disposed of any self-complacency on their part in judging him, so he disclaims as carefully all thought of self-interest or fear: "but all things, beloved, for your building up." Love never fails, and it builds up. For this he spoke and toiled and suffered.

And the more because he could not but have the gravest apprehensions of not a few in Corinth, whatever his comforting hopes of the rest. "For I fear, lost by any means on coming I find you not such as I wish, and I be found by you such as ye wish not." It was the dread of their state and its consequences for themselves and to his own heart which had hindered his going when he

had intended; and the delay had exposed him to evil tongues long since. And he still feared that the work of restoring grace meanwhile was not so complete, but that much which was amiss remained feebly if at all judged in many. For rather would he come in love and a spirit of meekness, than with a rod which their condition might demand. If he found any failing not in grace merely but in righteousness, those who were thus putting the Lord to shame must be as unwelcome to His servants, as he must prove to them in vindication of His name. The evils he hints at as still at work are those which he had so unsparingly rebuked in his first epistle; strife and jealousy, outbursts of angry passion and cabals, outspoken slanderings and privy whisperings, manifestations of proud insolence, and open disorders. It is a long list of sad evils; but how soon these might characterise true believers, where there is a party or parties to take up and spread and give effect to the word of leaders!

Some see it hard to reconcile the warm expressions of loving confidence found elsewhere, especially in the central part of the Epistle, with these forebodings. They even venture to conjecture that the latter portion from 2 Corinthians 10 formed another letter written at a different epoch, and under circumstances widely differing from those supposed in the preceding part; or at least that a considerable period elapsed between the writings of the former and the latter parts. But there is really no special difficulty, as the apostle does not here speak of all, but of many; and the attentive reader will not fail to discern, even in the earliest chapters of the first portion, quite enough to prepare him for the solemn

anxieties which press on the apostle's spirit before he closes the Epistle with his parting appeals.

Indeed, it has been pre-eminently remarked of this very chapter with truth that it contains the most striking contrasts among those that bear the name of the Lord. There is, on the one hand, the man in Christ, viewed in an extraordinary measure of enjoying the privileges of a Christian; there is, on the other, the most distressing exhibition of the worst possible state of the saints practically in both violence and corruption; and there is between these extremes the way of the saint, in being made nothing of, that the power of Christ might rest on him. Thus there is really no difficulty for those who accept God's word in simplicity; and the intellectual activity which musters objections is spiritually as infirm and unintelligent, as it also dishonours the Lord.

Verse 21 seems naturally inconsistent with the notion of a second visit as yet, though it is admitted on all hands that the apostle had intended ere this to have paid it. "Again" goes with coming, not with "humble," though some prefer giving it to the entire clause. What an expression of love lurks in the apostle's words! To find saints thus in sin was God humbling him in their presence, not them in his, as it looked as a fact. But he felt as he spoke "in Christ." It was God humbling him at the evil condition of his saints, and what it rendered necessary. And what does he say as he thinks of the grossest forms of it? "And I bewail many of those who have sinned beforehand, and not repented of the uncleanness, and fornication, and indecency which they committed." It is not that his hand would fail to wield the rod, but it was surely with a wounded heart which bled because of shameless evil among those who called

on the name of the Lord. Doubtless the corruptions were characteristic of heathen Corinth; and old habits soon revive, even in young converts, when the heart turns from Christ to other objects. But what a tale is told of feeble faith? For faith it is that overcomes; and they were overcome with evil, not overcoming it with good. Nature is an important fact for the enemy; but the Holy Spirit lifts above all hindrances, forming, exercising, and strengthening the new life we have in Christ our Lord.

2 Corinthians 13

The apostle reverts to his intention of visiting the Corinthian saints once more, and in such a way as to give a solemn force to the visit when it should be accomplished.

“This third [time] I am coming unto you. At [the] mouth of two witnesses and three shall every word [or, matter] be established. I have foretold and foretell, as if present the second [time] and now absent, to them that have sinned before and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare. Since ye seek a proof of the Christ speaking in me (who toward you is not weak, but is powerful in you, for although he was crucified in weakness, yet he liveth by God’s power; for indeed we are weak in him, but shall live with him by God’s power toward you), try your own selves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves. Or recognise ye not as to your own selves that Jesus Christ is in you, unless indeed ye be reprobate?” (Vers. 1-5.)

It had been already explained why the second visit had fallen through. It was to spare them he had not come. When he should revisit them, they must not expect such forbearance. His patience had been misconstrued by

some, if others had profited. But this third time he was coming; and when he did, everything should be established with due evidence. The previous warnings he had given, to not only those that had sinned heretofore but all the rest, only strengthened his resolve not to spare at his coming again. The, language most naturally conveys that he had not gone to Corinth the time when he had intended his second visit. Hence he says, “I have foretold and foretell, as if present the second time and now absent, to them that have sinned before and to all the rest,” etc. There is no ground apparent to my mind that this was literally a third visit, rather on the contrary the second in fact, though third in purpose.

It helps greatly to the understanding of what follows to see that, whether marked externally or not, there is a parenthesis after the first clause of the third verse which runs through the fourth also; so that the connection of the first clause of verse 3 is really with verse 5. Since ye seek a proof of the Christ speaking in me,.... try your own selves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own selves.” It is a final notice of and answer to their unworthy questioning of Paul’s apostleship. Did they demand a proof of Christ speaking in him? Were not they themselves proof enough? Had He not spoken to their souls in that servant of His who first caused His voice to be heard in Corinth? As surely as they were in the faith, which they did not at all question, he was an apostle — if not to others, assuredly to them. The many Corinthians who, hearing the apostle, believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, were the last who ought to gainsay the messenger if they appreciated the message and Him who sent the messenger. If they were reprobate, having

confessed Christ in vain, there was no force in the appeal, which derives all its power from their confidence that Christ was in them as the fruit of the apostle's preaching.

This also shows how baseless is the too common abuse of the passage, as well as of 1 Corinthians 11:28, to sanction a doubting self-examination, as one often hears, not only in the practical history of souls, but in the teaching of doctrinal schools otherwise opposed. Here, say they, we are taught to search ourselves and see that we be not too confident: does not the apostle in the first Epistle to the Corinthians call on each habitually to examine or prove himself before partaking of the Lord's Supper? and does he not pursue that special call by the general exhortation in the second Epistle to examine or try themselves whether they be in the faith? The truth is that an examination of the context in each case dispels the error as to both — an error which strikes directly at the peace of the believer, if not also the truth of the gospel. For the gospel is sent by God, founded on the personal glory and the work of His Son, to bring the believer into communion with the Father and the Son in full liberty of heart and with a purged conscience. These misinterpretations, under cover of jealousy for holiness, tend immediately to plunge the soul into doubt through questions about itself.

What then do the passages respectively teach? 1 Corinthians 11:28-31, the duty, need, and value of each Christian testing himself by the solemn truth of the Lord's death expressed and confessed and enjoyed in His supper. How slur over sin of any kind, were it but levity in word or deed, in presence of that death in which it came under God's judgment unsparingly for our

salvation? Nor is it enough to confess our faults to God or man, as the case may require; but as on the one hand we discern the body, the Lord's body, in that holy feast of which we are made free and which we can never neglect without dishonouring Him who thus died for us, so on the other hand are we called to discern ourselves, scrutinising the inward springs and motives of all, and not merely the wrong which appears to others. But this intimate self-searching, to which we are each called who partake of the Lord's Supper, is on the express ground of faith, and has no application whatever to an unbeliever. This last doubtless has been mischievously helped on by the error of "damnation" in the Authorised Version of verse 29, which verses 30-32 clearly refute, proving that the judgment in question is the discipline of sickness or death which the Lord wields over careless or faulty saints in positive contrast with the condemnation of the world. As for the passage in our chapter, we have already seen that the argument derives all its force from the certainty that those appealed to were in the faith, not in the least that they were uncertain. That they were in the faith through Paul's preaching ought to have been an unanswerable proof that Christ spoke through him; if Christ was not in them, they were reprobate; and was it for such to question his apostleship Scripture never calls a soul to doubt, always to believe. But self-judgment is ever a Christian's duty; and our privileges, we being in ourselves what we are, only deepen the importance, as representing Christ, of dealing with ourselves truly and intimately before God, as well as of reminding our souls habitually of the Lord's death and of its infinite and solemn import as shown forth in His Supper.

The parenthesis connects the apostle's ministry, Christ's speaking in him, with all he had laid down before as its true principle throughout the epistle, as well as in the preceding chapter. Christ certainly had shown Himself toward them not weak, but powerful in them. Let them only bethink themselves of the past, and weigh what His grace and truth had done for them. And if they found fault with the apostle as indifferent to, yea, as despising and abominating, fleshly power and worldly wisdom, let them think again of the Saviour, who "was crucified in [lit. out of] weakness, yet he liveth by [lit. out of] God's power." Let them judge then who was consistent with Christ, His cross and His resurrection — they with their natural thoughts; or the apostle with his ministry so despicable in the eyes of some? "For indeed we are weak in him, but shall live with him by God's power toward you." Where was dependence in faith of the crucified One? Where real power, as became the witness of resurrection and glory on high? Where unselfish devotedness and practical grace answering to Him who loved the church and gave Himself for it?

Thus did the apostle turn the unworthy demand of some in Corinth as to his apostolate to their own souls' blessing as well as to the overthrow of their argument. So at the beginning of this epistle he had dealt with their imputation of fickle levity if not of untruthfulness by insisting on the immutable truth of what he preached of Christ, and the power of God in the Holy Ghost's blessing that confirmed it in the believers. Not less does he here overwhelm those who, in their anxiety to dishonour his commission from Christ, were bringing to nought their own title to Christ. Did they seek evidence of Christ that spoke in Paul, and that was not weak

toward them but was mighty in them? Let them try their own selves whether they were in the faith. The apostle was content with no better evidence than his Corinthian converts, unless indeed they were reprobate, which was far from the ground they took or he. He had far rather give them, and that they required, no proof of his apostolic power in severe discipline.

“But I hope ye shall know that we are not reprobate. But we pray139 unto God that ye may do nothing evil, not that we may appear approved, but that ye may do the right though we be as reprobate. For we can do nothing against the truth but for the truth. For140 we rejoice when we are weak and ye are strong: this also we pray for, your perfecting. For this cause I write these things while absent, that I may not when present deal severely according to the authority which the Lord gave me for building up and not for casting down.”

It is impossible to conceive a more admirable dealing with a state of mind which must have been as grievous as it was humiliating to the apostle. Their high-minded ingratitude and short-sightedness only brought out an answer complete and withering, yet dignified, lowly, and loving. His heart was occupied with their further blessing, more than with his apostolic office, which he asserted for their sakes more than his own. To stand in doubt of him might jeopardise their own faith rather than his apostleship, which was there to he exercised if need were in vindication of the Lord against their evil, as it had already been by grace in their conversion. But he prayed that they might give no such occasion, not that the validity of his claim might appear, but that they might do that which became saints, even though he might lack such proofs or be ever so depreciated. There

would then be no occasion for the display of power, as their honourable walk would testify for the truth; and as for the apostle, he could say “we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we rejoice when we are weak and ye are strong.” And he prayed for this too, their perfecting.

It was reserved for the anti-church to claim irrevocable authority along with immunity from error. Where difference exists among the faithful, it is folly to claim a character which attaches only to their agreement in the power of the Spirit. And the apostle disclaims what the Roman pontiff arrogates, that clave errante the decision binds. The inevitable effect, soon or late, will be destruction, not edification. It is not Christ, but human assumption, not to say presumption.

Whether it be an individual’s assumption or an assembly’s, or whether as in one notable theory it be the chief along with that which represents the church as a whole, such a claim is fictitious and destructive of the Lord’s glory. The promise is strictly conditional, not absolute; and never was there an apparent failure save when the condition was broken, and then in very faithfulness the Lord gave not His sanction. To be unconditionally true, there ought also to have been infallibility, which belongs not even to an apostle but to God alone. The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way; and this now in the church by His own guaranteed presence and lending, though nothing seem harder to conceive where the several wills of so many would naturally act diversely. But He is there in the midst to make good His gracious power when truly waited on, with subjection in the Spirit to the written word which casts its divine light on facts and

persons; that all without force or fraud may act as one in the fear of God, or those who dissent may he manifested in their self-will, whether they be few or many.

But the taking for granted that a given sentence is irrevocable, because it is the opinion of a majority or even of a whole assembly, in the face of facts which overthrow its truth or righteousness, is not only fanatical (I do not say illogical only) but wicked fighting against God. In such a case, humbling as it is, most humbling for an assembly to judge itself hasty and mistaken in pretending to the mina of the Lord, where it was only the illusive influence of prejudiced leaders or the weakness of the mass who prefer general quiet in floating with the stream at all cost, or both causes or others also, the only course at all pleasing to the Lord is, that the error when known be confessed and renounced as publicly as it was committed, being due to Him and to the church, as well as to the individuals or company, if there he such, more immediately concerned. To keep up appearances in deference to men however respected if mistaken and misleading, to give expression to high-sounding terms or to vague begging the question of truth and right, in order to cloak an evident miscarriage of justice, is unworthy of Christ or of His servants. This was far from the apostle, who, as at the beginning of this epistle he disclaimed lording it over the faith of the saints, at the end proves his sincere desire, even when grievously slighted, to avoid if possible sharp dealing with those who had afforded grave occasion, and to use the authority which the Lord gave him for building up and not for casting down.

“For the rest, brethren, rejoice [or, farewell], be perfected, be encouraged, be of one mind, live in peace;

and the God of love and peace shall be with you. Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the saints salute you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit [be] with you all141."

May our souls be corrected and strengthened and refreshed by so benignant a conclusion! It well befits the epistle of restorative grace. The work of bringing back the saints in Corinth to meet thoughts in the Lord as to themselves and His servants, and the apostle especially, was only begun. Much remained to be done, both in fulfilling obedience and in avenging all disobedience. But the apostle was encouraged of God, and would comfort them on his part. He bids them, not merely farewell, but rejoice; he wishes what was lacking supplied, what was awry adjusted; he desires them to be not discouraged by or in occupation with themselves, but cheered on as they looked at his exhortation to the Lord; he would have them cultivate, not crotchety points of difference, but the same mind; he calls them, not to indulge in questions gendering strife, but to live in peace; and he assures them that the God of love and peace, as one combined blessing in the power of His presence, should be with them. What a spring of consolation for those who in the measure of deepening self-judgment might otherwise have been cast down! Nor was it only of that divine source of blessedness he assures them, but he calls on the expression to one another of mutual and holy love, as he sends it from all the saints in that part of Macedonia whence he wrote.

The benediction that closes all has the same suitability which we see in each epistle, admirably adapted to the state of the Corinthian saints, and of course not only to

all others in similar experience but instructive and wholesome for all that believe. Yet for this very reason one feels the unintelligence which turns such pointed words of blessing into a standing invariable form for all sorts of different occasions, as if we were reduced to one ouch mode of dismissal, or that it was of the Spirit of God to select that which might seem the most comprehensive and comforting. As God gives no licence to confusion in the assemblies, so does He not sanction those who walk in pride and passion, in self-will, railing, and contention, however graciously He may act, when they begin to judge themselves. We need, not the word of God only, but His Spirit to apply it aright: else we May unwittingly pervert even that word to real mischief, with cheer where reproof is rather called for, and rebuke where consolation would be more seasonable. But what grace is told out in this inspired servant sending under all the circumstances such a parting message to all the saints in Corinth! “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” Poor, weak, unworthy, what can saints lack to help them when this is made good? and what simple soul among the faithful would on such a warrant doubt it? or desire less or different for himself and his brethren? The free and full favour of Him who for us died and rose; the love of that God against whom we had without cause sinned to our utter ruin, yet who sent the Saviour to redeem us; the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, the power and seal of this infinite blessing, who gives us a common and abiding share in it all, yea, with the Father and the Son: what a portion to be with us all, and assured for ever!

124 For

κ. δὴ οὐ συμφέρει μοι, ἐλ, γάρ T. R. after K M and most cursives, etc.; the more ancient support κ. δεῖ, οὐ σον μέν, ἐλ. δέ, D, etc., having κ. δέ and B 213 ἐλ. δὲ καί.

125 B Dp.m. Ep.m. read

χωρίς, the rest

ἐκτός.

126

τι is added by T. B. and Lachmann.

127

διό A B F G, etc.

128 The last clause is omitted by the best MSS. p.m. A D E F G, etc., Vulg. Aeth., etc.; but it can hardly be doubted that it was done in error to correct a supposed repetition, which was meant for emphasis. This is an instructive fact.

129

μου is added in T. Rec. with many but not the highest authorities. It is implied.

130 Text. Rec. adds

καυχώμενος on large but inferior authority.

131 Good and numerous authorities support Text. Rec.

ἐν σ., as some read

τε σ., and p.m. * B, etc.,

σ. τε.

132

τοῦτο, omitted in Text. Rec. with three uncials and most cursives, is attested by A B F G, many cursives, and most

ancient versions etc., ὑμῶν “on you” being added in Text. Rec. with most but not the oldest.

133 Ibid.

134 The

καί is very doubtful, being rejected by p.m. B F G, etc., but given in most other authorities.

135

ἀγαπῶ instead of the participle in p.m. A and a few other witnesses.

136 Text. Rec. has

πάλιν supported by the later uncials and most cursives, versions, etc.; πάλαι p.m. A B F G and most of the Latins, Vulgate, etc.

137

κατέναντι on similar grounds, and rather stronger than the received κατενώπιον, 138 There is the highest, though not the largest, authority for the singular form, which seems to have been assimilated to the words following.

139

εὐχόμεθα A B D F G P many cursives and all the ancient versions save the Pesch. Syr. and the Gothic, instead of the sing. εὐχόμαι of the Text. Rec.

140 Text. Rec. adds

δέ contrary to the best authorities.

141 Text. Rec. adds

ἀμήν with most manuscripts (not the most early) and most ancient versions, etc.