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THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.
CHAPTERS IX-XVI.

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CHAPTER IX.

When discussing the question of meats offered to idols, in the concluding verses of Chapter VIII, St. Paul laid down the principle that in such matters the Christian is free to act as he thinks best, and is responsible solely to his own conscience. But he followed this declaration of principle with the round assertion that he personally was prepared to abridge the freedom which he claimed to any extent, rather than imperil the salvation of a weaker Christian brother. No sooner, however, have the words left his lips than the thought flashes across his mind that in saying them he has given an opening to his enemies at Corinth. He can foresee the contemptuous rejoinder they will make: "An excellent sentiment, but does he practise what he preaches?"

The Apostle sets out to refute this sneer. He will point to two details in which he has curtailed his personal liberty for the sake of others. He has declined to receive the support from the church which, as an apostle, he might have claimed to receive, and he has, in his own personal life, pursued a course of rigorous self-discipline. But before he can enter on this vindication of himself, there occurs to his mind a reply that his foes will most certainly make. They will say: "He declines to receive the support which is due from the church to an apostle, for the best of reasons. He knows in his heart that he is no apostle at all, but a mere pretender to the title."

It is against this charge that the opening words of the present chapter are directed. He must first make good his right to be an apostle, if he is to claim any credit

for foregoing an apostolic privilege. Now, it would appear from St. Paul's words in this connection, that any man who professed to be an apostle must possess two indispensable qualifications. He must have seen the Lord, and he must have done the "works" of an apostle. The first of these qualifications is obviously connected with the great work of the earliest Christians, the preaching of the resurrection. Only one who had "seen the Lord" could be a credible witness of that event. And the Apostle, probably referring to the vision of the road to Damascus, claims that he has fulfilled this requirement. As for the other qualification, the Corinthians themselves were the standing testimony to its fulfilment. In bringing to them the message of the Cross and forming them into a Christian church he had done the required "work". They need not look beyond themselves for proof of his apostleship.

Having thus proved that he *is* an apostle, he now proceeds to show that he has foregone the support to which his position entitled him. He might have claimed to be supported by his converts. The claim was allowed in the case of all the other apostles. And beside this, the claim was in itself an admittedly just one. He appeals to various departments of practical life, to Old Testament precepts, to the practice of the Old Testament priesthood, and—by way of absolutely clinching the matter—to the specific command of Jesus. All human experience testifies to the equity of the dictum that "the laborer is worthy of his hire", and the Christian apostle is no exception to that general rule.

And yet, St. Paul, instead of insisting on his right, had preferred to support himself at Corinth by the labor of his own hands. It was not his universal practice to do so. When, as in the case of the Philippian church, he was sure that gifts were the spontaneous expression of a fervent love, he gladly accepted them. But the Corinthians, if he had received such support from them, would have been inclined to class him with those wandering

sophists who taught for pay, with whom they were so very familiar; and any such suspicion would have been magnified to the uttermost by his Jewish foes, who were ready to put the worst possible construction on all his actions. Hence he was willing to forego his claim, if only he might thus advance his work.

This was the principle of all his actions. His sole desire was to win men for Christ. To secure this object he would put aside all his personal predilections; he would adapt himself to Jew or Gentile, to strong or weak. In fact, for the sake of the gospel, he would be all things to all men.

It is needless, perhaps, to point out that this principle ought to be applied with certain limitations. St. Paul's own epistles are the best testimony to the limits within which he worked. In the hands of an opportunist or a selfish man, the principle of "all things to all men" may easily result in hypocrisy and fraud. When governed by a burning zeal for Christ like that of St. Paul, there is little need to fear that the principle will be applied in any unworthy way.

It was not, however, merely for the sake of others that the Apostle put limits on the freedom he might have enjoyed. There is always the fear that privilege, if abused, may cease to profit. The discipline of self is salutary—even for an apostle. And, therefore, he declares that he, too, like an athlete training for the games, sternly keeps his body in subjection, lest, after preaching to others, he, the preacher, should himself be lost.

CHAPTER X.

The illustration of the necessity for self-discipline with which the last chapter closed, was one that would appeal more particularly to Gentile hearers. He proceeds now to illustrate his point by a reference to ancient Hebrew history. The chosen people themselves were a conspicuous instance of the truth, that the mere

possession of exalted privilege is in itself no guarantee of abiding spiritual welfare. It is not the possession, but the use of privilege that matters, and the fate of the Israelites in the wilderness was an ominous warning of the way in which lofty privileges could be abused and lost. The privileges were given to the whole people. The Apostle's emphatic repetition of the word "all"—it occurs five times in the first four verses—makes this abundantly clear. But the large majority of them proved unworthy. "With most of them God was not well pleased." In various ways, by idolatry, impurity and faithless murmurings, they provoked God's anger. They "lusted after evil things" and "they perished by the destroyer."

Apart from the grave truths which this passage emphasizes, its words have a further interest. They are an excellent example of St. Paul's method of treating Old Testament history. When he speaks of a "rock that followed them" we seem to be in the regions of Rabbinical exegesis and are reminded of the tradition about a rock, shaped like a bee-hive that rolled along and accompanied the Israelites on their journey. But when he speaks of the rock as "spiritual" and adds that "the rock was Christ" we feel that we are on a higher plane of thought. We may indeed see a hinted allusion to the Rabbinical tradition, but hardly more than that. St. Paul is spiritualizing the Old Testament history. Even in those wilderness days the pre-incarnate Christ was watching over and caring for His people, and the various manifestations of supernatural power were but the signs of His protecting presence.

The passage ends with a warning and a consolation. The warning is one that is always timely when men are apt to magnify their possession of privilege, and thereby to grow idle and conceited. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." If on the other hand the Christian should become over-anxious, so fearful of temptation that he does not take a single step

ahead, lest he should fall into a snare, let him remember that God is watching over him, who will permit no temptation that is too great to come upon him.

The Apostle now proceeds to emphasize his point by an illustration drawn from an entirely different sphere. Ever since the beginning of Chapter VIII the question before his mind has been that of the attendance of Christians at the religious rites and social feasts of heathendom. He has shown that even where the particular matter at issue may seem to be an unimportant one, we still are bound to consider the results of our actions—their effects both on others and ourselves. The Christian needs both a spirit of love and a spirit of self-discipline. He has illustrated this by the case of Israel in the wilderness. He now goes on to illustrate it by a reference to the nature of the Holy Communion. How, he asks, is it possible that one who partakes of the sacred meal of Christianity, should also be present at meals in idol temples? Participation in all such rites means communion of the worshiper with the deity worshiped. In heathen temples it meant communion with those demoniac powers of evil which (as St. Paul believed) lay behind the idolatrous systems of paganism. In Christianity it means the Christian's communion with Christ. What two things, then, could be more utterly incompatible than these? No Christian who had been present at the Holy Supper should have needed to be warned against idol feasts. To dream of participating in both was a reckless tempting of Divine Providence.

In closing the discussion of the topic, he lays down one or two broad rules for conduct. The dominating spirit must be one of loving consideration for the welfare of others. With this proviso, he maintains that all meat that is to be purchased in the ordinary markets should be regarded as ceremonially clean, and that no conscientious scruple should be raised in connection with it. If a Christian man were to dine with a non-Christian friend, he should not begin to raise questions whether

the meat was "clean", that is, whether some parts of the animal had previously been appropriated for use in heathen sacrifice. If, however, attention were to be called to the fact that the meat was, in this sense, "unclean" a Christian would do well to refrain from touching it; not because it really made any difference, but in order to avoid hurting the scruples of any weaker brother who might be present. It is true that the man who is untroubled by such scruples is, in the Christian sense, "free". But it is a pity to exercise one's freedom in circumstances where the only possible result will be misconception and harm. The Christian's guiding principle should be to avoid hurting his brethren; the aim to which all his acts tend should be their full and perfect salvation.

CHAPTER XI.

We enter now upon another and a clearly defined section of the epistle, extending from the beginning of this chapter to the end of Chapter XIV. It is occupied with various questions concerning the mutual relations and the behavior of the members of the Corinthian church. The present chapter deals with two of these points, the proper dress and behavior of women in the public gatherings of the church, and the disorderly practices prevalent at the administration of the Lord's Supper.

In order to appreciate St. Paul's counsels in these matters we have to put ourselves at his standpoint and at the standpoint of his age. Amongst Greeks it was the general custom for both men and women to worship with uncovered heads. With the Romans, on the other hand, both men and women veiled the head during the performance of religious ceremonial. With the Jews, men veiled the head, while women were not only veiled but concealed behind a screen. The Apostle's injunctions here do not fall exactly into line with any of these distinctly national practices. They seem to be rather an attempt to modify Greek usage by the influence of Chris-

tian ideas. He lays down the rule that in acts of worship men should have the head uncovered, but women should be veiled. This advice appears to be based on the general principle that the worshiper should be veiled when any superior is *visibly* present. So far as this world is concerned man is the highest of created beings. Christ, who is superior to him, is not *visibly* present; hence man should worship with uncovered head. Man, however, is the superior of woman; hence, when men and women are jointly engaged in acts of worship, the woman must be veiled in acknowledgement of that superior presence. St. Paul even goes so far as to say that the woman who violates these proprieties, classes herself, by doing so, with the slave and the adulteress. That is his meaning in the words: "It is one and the same thing as if she were shaven."

However present-day opinion may regard St. Paul's view of the relative position of the sexes, there is no escaping from the fact that he held it, and maintained it, too, on Scriptural grounds. He appeals to the creation narrative in Genesis as testimony to the fact that man was created first and woman was created "for the man". We must, of course, read his words here in connection with his admission, made a little later, of the equality of man and woman "in the Lord". We must also recall his sublime and spiritual view of marriage in the Epistle to the Ephesians. But when all due allowance has been made, his view still remains clear that in all the public ministration and authoritative teaching of the church, woman must yield the place of priority to man, and it can hardly be denied that the subsequent history of the church has tended to confirm the wisdom of that view.

One curious phase in this discussion calls for a word of special comment. The Apostle declares that woman should be veiled at worship "because of the angels". Many varied interpretations have been suggested for these words. The most reasonable one seems to be that the Apostle believed angels to be invisibly present at acts

of Christian worship; he also believed that they had been spectators, as it were, of the creation of man and woman. They, therefore, would be especially distressed and displeased at any behavior in acts of worship that violated the order and precedence revealed in the original creation. Hence it was "because of the angels", in addition to all the other reasons, that due decorum must be preserved. It is interesting to recall, in this connection, the expression of the same belief in angelic presence in the works of the Liturgy: "Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify thy glorious name."

St. Paul now turns to another class of disorder in the church, the irreverent behavior of its members at the Communion. Here again in order to understand his words we must recall the local conditions. The actual administration of the sacrament seems to have taken place at the end of a social meal known as the Agape, or love feast. It appears that to this meal the various members brought their own contributions. At a later stage in the history of the church the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was entirely dissociated from connection with the Agape, which had fallen into disrepute. What happened at Corinth when St. Paul wrote these words was that "cliques" and "sets" were painfully apparent at their love feasts. The richer members not only drew together in marked isolation from the poorer ones, but actually assembled at an earlier hour in order to enjoy the feast before the poorer brethren could arrive. St. Paul's words indicate, too, that the food and drink were not mere symbols of brotherly love. Men made an actual meal of the feast, so much so that even drunkenness was not unknown.

To correct these flagrant disorders he recalls, in familiar words, the circumstances of the institution of the Last Supper, declaring how in this solemn rite Christians "proclaim the Lord's death till He come". In grave

and weighty words he warns them against heedless and unworthy participation in the Sacred Feast, declaring that disaster has already fallen on some of them in consequence of this sin. He finally entreats them to distinguish between this meal with its sacred symbolism, and ordinary meals where men eat to satisfy their hunger. Let hunger be satisfied at home and let the members of the church wait for one another before entering on the meal which typifies their common salvation and their mutual love.

CHAPTER XII.

We enter in the next three chapters on a topic beset with various difficulties—the question of the use and abuse of spiritual gifts. St. Chrysostom himself has declared that this section of the Epistle is “exceedingly obscure”. It is hardly then a matter for wonder that modern readers should often find themselves perplexed. To do full justice to the subject an elaborate treatise would be required. It must suffice for our present purpose to set forth in outline one or two of its more important features.

The one main topic is the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian community. How is that to be recognized? In general, says St. Paul, by confession of the Lordship of Jesus. No man makes this confession save at the bidding of the Holy Spirit.

But the Christian church, it must be remembered is an organism. Like all other organisms it displays at once diversity and unity. The unity of its life is the unity of the God who is its Lord. The diversity is as manifold as its members are numerous.

St. Paul finds the aptest illustration of this truth in the constitution of the human body. The comparison of the body politic with the human body and its various members is as old as Menenius Agrippa and the secession of the plebeians to the Sacred Mount in the early

days of Roman history. It seems to have appealed with peculiar force to St. Paul, for he alludes to it, more or less fully, on three separate occasions. Our present passage is the one in which the comparison is most fully worked out.

It was necessary for him to emphasize this truth, for the Corinthian church was divided by rivalries not only as to the merits of different teachers, but as to the spiritual endowments possessed by various individuals. Its members were inclined also to overestimate certain gifts which appeared to possess analogy to the manifestations of heathendom, and to underestimate those which were of more real and enduring worth. Here it was that the lesson of the human body was helpful. Just as it has various members, some for more honorable, some for less honorable uses, so the church has various members, some possessed of higher, some of lower, spiritual gifts. Just as each organ, whether high or low in rank, is absolutely essential to the body's welfare, so each member with his differing gifts is indispensable to the church's life. As in the body, injury of one organ affects the condition of the whole, so one Christian's lapse into sin reacts on the general welfare of the church. In fact, Christians "are the body of Christ and severally members thereof."

The Apostle then proceeds to instance various kinds of spiritual gifts which individuals may possess and thereby contribute to the totality of the church's life. The list begins with the apostolate and ends with "divers kinds of tongues". It includes both officers and aptitudes. Some of the gifts mentioned, such as "miracles" and "gifts of healing", would now be classed as supernatural; others, such as "helps" and "governments", would be classed as normal phenomena. But of all alike it is true that they come from the Spirit, who distributes them at will. It is no more possible that *all* should possess, say, the apostolic, to the exclusion of all other gifts, than that the human body should be entirely an eye or an

ear. The church cannot dispense with any one of the varied gifts, if her activity is to be vigorous and her corporate life in perfect health.

One point, however, needs further emphasis. Just as in the body, some organs are more vitally necessary than others, so there are degrees of importance in the matter of spiritual gifts. Some are higher and more to be desired than others. St. Paul's purpose is to estimate the respective worth of two in particular, the gift of "prophecy" and the gift of "tongues". But before proceeding to discuss the matter, a more fundamental consideration even than this occurs to his thoughts. He will show the Corinthians "a still more excellent way".

CHAPTER XIII.

There is one thing without which every spiritual gift becomes useless and ineffective—the gift of love. The loftiest spiritual endowment, the firmest faith, the widest philanthropy, the utmost self-sacrifice, without love are nothing. What love can do the Apostle sets forth in that matchless lyrical outburst which defies any analysis or paraphrase. Love, he declares, can under any stress of circumstances "hear," "believe" and "hope", and if faith and hope be dead she can still "endure". Love alone is eternal; "prophecy" and "tongues" alike will play their part and vanish. They are concerned with this fleeting world of dim light and imperfect knowledge. But perfection will, one day, come and love will still be gloriously supreme. Faith will be absorbed in sight, Hope will fade as fruition is achieved, but Love will still remain the indispensable necessity to the bliss of our eternal life.

In whatever respects our Revised Version is open to criticism, it can hardly be denied that it has done good service in its rendering of this chapter. It is a real gain to have "love" in place of "charity". In modern speech the word charity has become so entirely associated with

the idea of "almsgiving" that it requires a mental effort to give it back its original significance. A further gain is, that we can now see in the English, what has always been apparent in the Greek, how closely related in this matter St. Paul's thought is to St. John's. We feel that the Apostle who wrote, "the greatest of these is love", was dwelling on the heights with him whose message was that "God is love."

CHAPTER XIV.

Now that St. Paul has shown the necessary condition for the effectiveness of any spiritual gift at all, he is free to discuss the relative merits of two in which the Corinthian Christians were more particularly interested, the gift of prophecy and the gift of tongues. To define the precise nature of these two gifts is by no means an easy task. Prophecy, it would seem, was, broadly, equivalent to what we mean by preaching—preaching, that is, in the best and highest sense of the term. It "edified" the church; it meant giving to the church "edification and comfort and consolation". No more fitting words than these could be found to express the preacher's true ideal.

In defining the gift of tongues we are faced by many perplexing problems. From St. Paul's description we gather that "tongue speech" was not addressed to men, but to God. In fact, to the general hearer it was unintelligible and could only be understood by means of an interpreter. The speaker "edified" himself and not the church. From the point of view of general edification it was a comparatively useless gift, for all sounds are useless that do not convey some particular significance. It only became useful, if some one was at hand to interpret.

What, then, was this gift of "tongues"? Can it be correlated with any other known phenomenon of the apostolic age? What, in particular, was its relation to the gift of "tongues" vouchsafed to the church on the day of Pentecost?

In answer to these questions, the suggestion may be advanced that both at Jerusalem and at Corinth, the gift was connected with abnormal mental conditions. Those who exercised it were in a condition of "ecstasy". It is also to be noted that at both places the language employed was that of prayer and adoration. It was directed to God and not to man. Another point of resemblance is that the outward demeanor of those "possessed" excited similar comment at both places. At Jerusalem men said that the apostles were "filled with new wine"; at Corinth St. Paul declares that if all exercise the gift and strangers enter the church they will "say that ye are mad".

Admitting, then, these points of resemblance, we have still to face another difficulty. A feature of the gift at Pentecost was the power of speaking foreign languages. Men of various nationalities, hearing the apostles speak, were surprised to hear their own various dialects. Was this the case at Corinth, too? Some of the most recent critical opinions maintain that it certainly was. It is held that the reference to "interpretation" points especially in this direction. Others incline to the view that speech in foreign languages formed no part of the phenomenon either at Jerusalem or at Corinth; that at both places the speech was simply the intelligible language of ecstasy, and that St. Luke was misinformed in supposing that at Pentecost the apostles spoke in foreign tongues.

To very many this last supposition will seem a highly improbable one and they will require very conclusive proof before accepting it. A hypothesis may be advanced here for their consideration, which whatever be its other merits, has that of maintaining the historicity of St. Luke's narrative in Acts. We hear much nowadays of the "subliminal" or "unconscious" self—that almost unexplored region of personality which seems to be behind our normal consciousness. We know that when, through any exciting cause, our normal consciousness is, for the time, suspended, this "unconscious" self

is set free, as it were, to give off the various impressions that have been made on it. We know, for example, that under an anaesthetic, or in delirium, people will speak in foreign languages, and in other respects, speak in ways of which they would be incapable in their ordinary consciousness. A very reasonable explanation seems to be that their "unconscious" or "subliminal" self has received at some time or other, impressions of these things, and that this "self" is now roused to activity and is giving off the impressions it received. But the exciting cause of the activity of the "unconscious self" need not necessarily be physical; it may be mental or spiritual. It is not inconceivable that under the impulse of the Holy Spirit's possession the disciples on the day of Pentecost may have been, for the time, transported to an abnormal plane of consciousness, a condition of "ecstasy"; and that under these conditions, expressions of praise and devotion in many different languages, which they had at various times heard in the streets of Jerusalem, would be set free from the recesses of the "subliminal" self and would come flooding to their lips. If this were the true account of the matter, one thing would be clear — that St. Luke has related what actually took place.

It would be rash to assert, on our present available evidence, that speech in foreign tongues formed an essential part of "tongue speech" at Corinth. One or two other things are quite clear about it. St. Paul did not encourage the too frequent use of the gift. It was one that ought to be kept under control. The gift of prophecy was higher and was preferable, for the very reason that, in its employment, the will and intellect were in a state of normal activity. Whereas, in the exercise of the gift of tongues they seem to have been in abeyance. He seems to have held also that the chief use of this gift was to arrest the attention of the outside world by its evidence of unusual and unearthly power; but that when once the result was secured, its proper work was done and prophecy alone would be of further use.

He closes this discussion, as we have seen him close the earlier ones, with a few words of detailed advice. No more than two, or at the most three, members, should exercise the gift of tongues at any one service, and they should exercise it in turn. If no interpreter were present, then the gift should not be exercised at all. The prophets also must speak in order. If a "revelation" should be made to one who was sitting by, then the one already speaking should give way and hold his peace.

Women must keep silence in the churches. The apparent inconsistency with the earlier passage, in which they seemed to be allowed to pray or prophesy with veiled heads, may perhaps be best explained by supposing that they were excluded from the authoritative teaching and government of the church, and that subject to this important exclusion, they might take some part in acts of public worship.

There is a sharp and peremptory tone in St. Paul's concluding words which seems to indicate that he was weary of the Corinthian vagaries and excesses in these matters. Whatever their own views might be, he bids them remember that his words are "the commandment of the Lord". All things must "be done decently and in order."

CHAPTER XV.

St. Paul has hitherto reproved the Corinthians chiefly for matters of conduct. He now turns to a topic on which their fancied superior wisdom was leading them far astray not only in conduct but in a fundamental doctrine of the faith. Some, at any rate, amongst them frankly rejected the idea of a general bodily resurrection. They said: "There is no resurrection of the dead."

In one respect we have reason to be thankful that they did so. For it is to this that we owe one of the most precious passages in the Pauline writings. On the one hand, it is the most direct and explicit piece of testimony

to the objective reality of our Lord's resurrection that the New Testament affords; on the other, it contains those words of inspired hope and comfort which sound in the ears of all Christian mourners when they lay their dead in the earth. In the history of dogma, too, the chapter has a place of peculiar interest, for it is the earliest extant essay in Christian doctrine.

These Corinthian "free thinkers" did not, it would seem, deny the fact of our Lord's resurrection. He, indeed, had risen from the dead; but, they held, it did not therefore follow that men in general might also rise. The resurrection of Jesus was a unique and unparalleled thing, from which no inference whatever could be drawn as to the resurrection of those who took Him for their Lord. One of the most important features in the Apostle's argument is his refutation of this position. To deny the *possibility* of a general resurrection is, he maintains, to deny the *actuality* of Christ's resurrection. To admit the *actuality* of His, is to admit the *possibility* of resurrection for the race.

In order that there may be no missing link in his chain of argument, St. Paul begins by rehearsing the historical evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus. This is the first stage in his demonstration of the certainty of the resurrection. From this he goes on to argue that to deny the possibility of resurrection in general is, implicitly, to deny Christ's resurrection, and so to render the gospel message entirely illusory. He then proceeds to show that Christ's resurrection is not an isolated phenomenon, but is the "first fruits" of a great harvest, the ingathering of which is necessary to the fulfillment of God's kingdom. He further points out that this is not merely a matter of speculative interest, but has clearly perceptible results on conduct.

Having, in this way, established the *certainty* of the resurrection, he proceeds to discuss its *nature*. He appeals to various analogies—to the difference between the seed and the full grown plant and to the variety of

material forms in the visible universe in order to show the antecedent probability that there may be a future body of a higher order than our present bodily frame; there may be a "spiritual" as well as a "natural" body. Further, if the result of our connection with Adam, the first ancestor of the race, has been the bestowal of a "natural" body, our connection with Christ, the Redeemer of the race will involve for us an appropriate "spiritual" body. It will only be by triumph over mortality on such lines as these that God's promises will receive their complete fulfilment and the toils of His servants find their proper goal.

Such, in brief outline, is the Apostle's argument. We have only space here to emphasize one or two of its leading points. He begins by recalling the facts of the Passion as he himself had received and taught them. He then enumerates various appearances of the risen Lord—in one case to over five hundred brethren at once, the majority of whom were still alive. Such an appearance as this, if we are willing to accept the Apostle's testimony that it took place, effectively disposes of all theories about hallucination and subjective visions. Finally, the risen Christ appeared to St. Paul himself, the reference here being probably to the appearance on the road to Damascus.

So much for the fact. He then presses home the point that to deny the possibility of resurrection in general, is to deny this resurrection of Christ which he has just shown on strictly historical grounds, to be a demonstrably real thing. He presses home, too, the point that Christ's efficiency as the Savior of men from sin, is bound up with his resurrection, and that if the resurrection did not take place, the faith reposed in Christ as Savior is a vain and futile thing; the apostles were promulgators of a falsehood; those who died hoping in Christ were, as a matter of fact, dead for ever—the poor deluded victims of a lie.

But the fact is true; Christ *is* risen. He is, further-

more, the harbinger of resurrection for mankind. Just as the handful of corn offered in gratitude at the temple meant that the harvest was standing in the field, so Christ's resurrection means that His saved ones will share His risen life. He does not stand alone; He is **"the first born among many brethren"*. Only so can the glorious end be reached. The Son will save men from death as well as from sin. Only then and only so can He submit His finished work to God the Father.

In pointing to the cheated hopes of Christians, if the resurrection of Christ be not a fact, St. Paul alludes to the custom of baptizing "for the dead". Many explanations have been suggested for these words. Perhaps the simplest is this: It must often have happened that converts who accepted Christian baptism were distressed as to the fate of relatives and friends who had died in heathendom; and the custom, therefore, arose of being baptized on their behalf in order that the benefits of baptism might extend to them. After all, it was only an extension of the principle of vicarious action. If Christ could die on His cross for a world of sinners, might not His followers be baptized for their departed friends—do for them what they could not do for themselves? If Christ were *not* raised, such baptism would be but an idle form; the toils and struggles of the apostles themselves would be but wasted effort. The mass of men, in the absence of this inspiring hope, would try to make the best of the present world by indulgence in sensual excess. Traces of this were visible at Corinth, and St. Paul sternly recalls his converts to a better mind.

But some enquirer might ask: "How can such a thing as a resurrection be? What is the mode of its operation?" St. Paul does not directly answer this. It must remain a mystery. But the fact that it is mysterious should not raise a prejudice against its reality. For the same mystery envelopes the growth of every seed. We see the tiny seed, and we see the perfect flower. *How* the one

*Romans, viii: 29.

has grown to be the other still remains a baffling and inexplicable mystery. But the passage from one form to another, apparently from a lower to a higher life, in the world of Nature illustrates the possibility of such passage in the world of men. That the "natural" should come first and then the "spiritual" is, after all, only a particular case of the general law of upward progress. It is true that we are at present on the earth and are "earthly"; but "we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Finally, the Apostle has a "mystery", a truth of revelation, to set forth. There will come a day when the last trumpet will sound, when the dead will rise, and those who are alive and on the earth will "be changed". It may be that, at this period, he believed that this great event might take place in his own lifetime. Afterwards he came to see that the church on earth was likely to have a more extended future before it. We believe that his words will yet find their fulfillment. When that day comes, the final paean will be chanted of law fulfilled, of sin defeated and of death destroyed—the victory of Christ. In hope of this, His followers may work and fight. *His* victory will crown *their* toil.

CHAPTER XVI.

In a few brief practical words, the Apostle gives injunctions for the method in which the Corinthian contribution to the collection for the poorer members of the church at Jerusalem should be made. It should be going on systematically and should not be left till his own arrival at Corinth. He hopes that Corinthian delegates will accompany him when he takes their bounty to Jerusalem. He hopes to see them all soon; but at present the claims of the work at Ephesus are pressing.

If Timothy should come, he prays them to receive him with courtesy and friendliness. Apollos, it appears, was disinclined to go to Corinth. Probably he wished

to keep away from a church the members of which might wish to use him as a party leader against St. Paul.

Throughout the closing words of salutation and personal greeting, he pleads the one supreme necessity—love. Let all things be done in love; let them love their Lord. He who does not love Him should be anathema. In two brief Aramaic words "*Maran atha*", he gives them a motto and a watchword, "the Lord is coming". May His grace be with them, as St. Paul's own love—in Him—is with them every one.