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**THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE
CORINTHIANS**

BY

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THE MEASURE OF CHRIST'S LOVE

"Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men, but we are made manifest unto God; and I hope that we are made manifest also in your consciences. We are not again commending ourselves unto you, but speak as giving you occasion of glorying on our behalf, that ye may have wherewith to answer them that glory in appearance and not in heart. For whether we are beside ourselves, it is unto God; or whether we are of sober mind, it is unto you. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that One died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who for their sakes died and rose again."--2 Cor. v. 11-15 (R.V.).

The Christian hope of immortality is elevated and solemnised by the thought of the judgment-seat of Christ. This is no strange thought to St. Paul; many a time he has set himself in imagination in that great presence, and let the awe of it descend upon his heart. This is what he means when he writes, "Knowing the fear of the Lord." Like the pastors addressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, he exercises his office as one who must render an account. In this spirit, he says, he persuades men. A motive so high, and so stern in its purifying power, no minister of Christ can afford to dispense with. We need something to suppress self-seeking, to keep conscience vigorous, to preserve the message of reconciliation itself from degenerating into good-natured indifference, to prohibit immoral compromises and superficial healing of the soul's hurts. Let us familiarise our minds, by meditation, with the fear due to Christ the judge, and a new element of power will enter into our service, making it at once more urgent and more wholesome than it could otherwise be.

The meaning of the words "we persuade men" is not at once clear. Interpreters generally find in them a combination of two ideas--we try to win men for the Gospel, and we try to convince them of our own purity of motive in our evangelistic work. The word is suitable enough to express either idea; and though it is straining it to make it carry both, the first is suggested by the general tenor of the passage, and the second seems to be demanded by what follows. "We try to convince men of our disinterestedness, but we do not need to try to convince God; we have been manifested to Him already; [45] and we trust also that we have been manifested in your consciences." Paul was well aware of the hostility with which he was regarded by some of the Corinthians, but he is confident that, when his appeal is tried in the proper court, decision must be given in his favour, and he hopes that this has really been done at Corinth. Often we do not give people in his position the benefit of a fair trial. It is not in our consciences they are arraigned--i.e., in God's sight, and according to God's law--but at the bar of our prejudices, our likes and dislikes, sometimes even our whims and caprices. It is not their character which is taken into account, but something quite irrelevant to character. Paul did not care for such estimates as these. It was nothing to him whether his appearance made a favourable impression on those who heard him--whether they liked his voice, his gestures, his manners, or even his message. What he did care for was to be able to appeal to their consciences, as he could appeal to God, to whom all things were naked and opened, that in the discharge of his functions as an evangelist he had been absolutely simple and sincere. In speaking thus, he has no intention of again recommending himself. Rather, as he says with a touch of irony, it is for their convenience he writes; he is giving them occasion to boast on his behalf, that when they encounter people who boast in face and not in heart they may not be speechless, but may have something to say for themselves--and for him. It is easy to read between the lines here. The

Corinthians had persons among them--Jewish and Judaizing teachers evidently--who boasted "in face"; in other words, who prided themselves on outward and visible distinctions, though as Paul asserts, they had nothing within to be proud of. There are suggestions of these distinctions elsewhere, and we can imagine the claims men made, the airs they gave themselves, or at least the recognition they consented to accept, on the ground of them. Their eloquence, their knowledge of the Scriptures, their Jewish descent, their acquaintance with the Twelve, above all acquaintance with Jesus Himself--these were their credentials, and of these their followers made much. Perhaps even on their own ground Paul could have met and routed most of them, but meanwhile he leaves them in undisturbed possession of their advantages, such as they are. He only sums up these advantages in the disparaging word "face," or "appearance"; they are all on the outside; they amount to "a fair show in the flesh," but no more. He would not like if his disciples could make no better boast of their master, and all the high things he has written, from chap. ii. 14 on to chap. v. 10, especially his vindication of the absolute purity of his motives, furnish them, if they choose to take it so, with grounds of counter-boasting, far deeper and more spiritual than those of his adversaries. For he boasts, not "in appearance, but in heart." The ironical tone in this is unmistakable, yet it is not merely ironical. From the beginning of Christianity to this day, Churches have gathered round men, and made their boast in them. Too often it has been a boast "in face," and not "in heart"--in gifts, accomplishments, and distinctions, which may have given an outward splendour to the individual, but which were entirely irrelevant to the possession of the Christian spirit. Often even the imperfections of the natural man have been gloried in, simply because they were his; and the Lutheran and Calvinistic Churches, for example, owe some of their most distinctive features to an exaggerated appreciation of those very characteristics of Luther and Calvin which had no Christian value. The same thing is seen every day, on a smaller scale, in congregations. People are proud of their minister, not for what he is in heart, but because he is more learned, more eloquent, more naturally capable, than other preachers in the same town. It is a pity when ministers themselves, like the Judaists in Corinth, are content to have it so. The true evangelist or pastor will choose rather, with St. Paul, to be taken for what he is as a Christian, and for nothing else; and if he must be spoken about, he will be spoken of in this character, and in no other. Nay, if it really comes to glorying "in face," he will glory in his weaknesses and incapacities; he will magnify the very earthiness of the earthen vessel, the very coarseness of the clay, as a foil to the power and life of Christ which dwell in it.

The connexion of ver. 13 with what precedes is very obscure. Perhaps as fair a paraphrase as any would run thus: "And well may you boast of our complete sincerity; for whether we are beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we are of sober mind, it is unto you; that is, in no case is self-interest the motive or rule of our conduct." Connexion apart, there is a further difficulty about eite exestemen. The Revised Version renders it "whether we are beside ourselves," but in the margin gives "were" for "are." It makes a very great difference which tense we accept. If the proper meaning is given by "are," the application must be to some constant characteristic of the Apostle's ministry. His enthusiasm, his absolute superiority to common selfish considerations such as are ordinarily supreme in human life, his resolute assertion of truths lying beyond the reach of sense, the unearthly flame which burned unceasingly in his bosom, and never more brightly than when he wrote the fourth and fifth chapters of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians--all these constitute the temper which is described as being "beside oneself," a kind of sacred madness. It was in this sense that the accusation of being beside himself was brought on a memorable occasion against Jesus (Mark iii. 21, exeste). The disciple and the Master alike seemed to those who did not understand them to be in an

overstrained, too highly wrought condition of spirit; in the ardour of their devotion they allowed themselves to be carried beyond all natural limits, and it was not improper to speak of applying some kindly restraint. At first sight this interpretation seems very appropriate, and I do not think that the tense of exestemen is decisive against it. [46] Those who think it is point to the change to the present tense in the next clause, eite sophronoumen, and allege that this would have no motive unless exestemen were a true past. But this may be doubted. On the one hand, exeste in Mark iii. 21 can hardly mean anything but "He is beside Himself"--i.e., it is virtually a present; on the other, the grammatical present existametha would not unambiguously convey the idea of madness, and would therefore be inappropriate here. But assuming that the change of tense has the effect of making exestemen a real past, and that the proper rendering is "whether we were beside ourselves," what is the application then? We must suppose that some definite occasion is before the Apostle and his readers, on which he had been in an ecstasy (cf. en ekstasei, Acts xi. 5; egeneto ep' auton ekstasis, Acts x. 10), and that his opponents availed themselves of this experience, in which he had passed, for a time, out of his own control, to whisper the malicious accusation that he had once not been quite right in his mind, and that this explained much. The Apostle, we should have to assume, admits the fact alleged, but protests against the inference drawn from it, and the use made of the inference. "I was beside myself," he says; "but it was an experience which had nothing to do with my ministry; it was between God and my solitary self; and to drag it into my relations with you is a mere impertinence." That the "ecstasis" in question was his vision of Jesus on the way to Damascus, and that his adversaries sought to discredit that, and the apostleship of Paul as grounded on that, is one of the extravagances of an irresponsible criticism. Of all experiences that ever befell him, his conversion is the very one which was not solely his own affair and God's, but the affair of the whole Church; and whereas he speaks of his ecstasies and visions with evident reluctance and embarrassment, as in chap. xii. 1 ff., or refuses to speak of them at all, as here (assuming this interpretation to be the true one), he makes his conversion and the appearance of the Lord the very foundation of his preaching, and treats of both with the utmost frankness. It must be something quite different from this--something analogous perhaps to me speaking with tongues, in which "the understanding was unfruitful," but for which Paul was distinguished (1 Cor. xiv. 14-18)--that is intended here. Such rapt conditions are certainly open to misinterpretation; and as their spiritual value is merely personal, Paul declines to discuss any allusion to them, as if it affected his relation to the Corinthians.

The strongest point in favour of this interpretation seems to me not the tense of exestemen, but the use of Theo: "it is unto God." If the meaning were the one first suggested, and the madness were the holy enthusiasm of the Evangelist, that would be distinctly a thing which did concern the Corinthians, and it would not be natural to withdraw it from their censure as God's affair. Nevertheless, one can conceive Paul saying that he was answerable for his extravagances, not to them, but to his Master; and that his sober-mindedness, at all events, had their interests in view. On a survey of the whole case, and especially with Mark iii. 21, and the New Testament use of the verb existamai before us, I incline to think that the text of the Revised Version is to be preferred to the margin. The "being beside himself" with which Paul was charged will not, then, be an isolated incident in his career--an incident which Jewish teachers, remembering the ecstasies of Peter and John, could hardly object to--but the spiritual tension in which he habitually lived and wrought. The language, so far as I can judge, admits of this interpretation, and it brings the Apostle's experience into line, not only with that of his Master, but with that of many who have succeeded him. But how great and rare is the self-conquest of the man who can say that in his enthusiasm and his sobriety alike--when he is beside himself, and when his spirit is wholly subject to him--the

one thing which never intrudes, or troubles his singleness of mind, is the thought of his own private ends.

In the verses which follow, Paul lets us into the secret of this unselfishness, this freedom from by-ends and ambition: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that One died for all, therefore all [of them] died." "Constraineth" is one of the most expressive words in the New Testament; the love of Christ has hold of the Apostle on both sides, as it were, and urges him on in a course which he cannot avoid. It has him in its grasp, and he has no choice, under its irresistible constraint, but to be what he is, and to do what he does, whether men think him in his mind or out of his mind. That the love of Christ means Christ's love to us, and not our love to Him, is shown by the fact that Paul goes on at once to describe in what it consists. **"It constrains us," he says, "because we have come to this mind about it: One died for all; so then all died." Here, we may say, is the content of Christ's love, the essence of it, that which gives it its soul-subduing and constraining power: He loved us, and gave Himself for us; He died for all, and in that death of His all died.**

It may seem a hazardous thing to give a definition of love, and especially to shut up within the boundaries of a human conception that love of Christ which passes knowledge. But the intelligence must get hold somehow even of things inconceivably great, and the New Testament writers, with all their diversity of spiritual gifts, are at one as to what is essential here. They all find Christ's love concentrated and focussed in His death. They all find it there inasmuch as that death was a death for us. Perhaps St. Paul and St. John penetrated further, intellectually, than any of the others into the mystery of this "for"; but if we cannot give it a natural interpretation, and an interpretation in which an absolutely irresistible constraint is hidden for heart and will, we do not know what the Apostles meant when they spoke of Christ's love. **There has been much discussion about the "for" in this place. It is huper, not anti, and many render it simply "on our behalf," or "for our advantage." That Christ did die for our advantage is not to be questioned. Neither is it to be questioned that this is a fair rendering of huper. But what does raise question is whether this interpretation of the "for" supplies sufficient ground for the immediate inference of the Apostle "so then all died." Is it logical to say, "One died for the benefit of all: hence all died"? From that premiss is not the only legitimate conclusion "hence all remained alive"? Plainly, if Paul's conclusion is to be drawn, the "for" must reach deeper than this mere suggestion of our advantage: if we all died, in that Christ died for us, there must be a sense in which that death of His is ours; He must be identified with us in it: there, on the cross, while we stand and gaze at Him, He is not simply a person doing us a service; He is a person doing us a service by filling our place and dying our death. It is out of this deeper relation that all services, benefits, and advantages flow; and that deeper sense of "for," to which Christ in His death is at once the representative and the substitute of man, is essential to do justice to the Apostle's thought. Without the ideas involved in these words we cannot conceive, as he conceived it, the love of Christ. We cannot understand how that force, which exercised such absolute authority over his whole life, appealed to his intelligence. We do not mean what he meant even when we use his words; we gain currency, under cover of them, for ideas utterly inadequate to the spiritual depth of his.**

If this were an exposition of St. Paul's theology, and not of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, I should be bound to consider the connexion between that outward death of Christ in which the death of all is involved, and the appropriation of that death to themselves by individual men. But the Apostle does not directly raise this question here; he only adds in the fifteenth verse a statement of the purpose for which Christ died, and in doing so suggests that the connecting

link is to be sought, in part at least, in the feeling of gratitude. "He died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." In dying our death Christ has done something for us so immense in love that we ought to be His, and only His, for ever. To make us His is the very object of His death. Before we know Him we are naturally selfish; we are an end to ourselves, in the bad sense; we are our own. Even the sacrifices which men make for their families, their country, or their order, are but qualifications of selfishness; it is not eradicated and exterminated till we see and feel what is meant by this--that Christ died our death. The life we have after we have apprehended this can never be our own; nay, we ourselves are not our own; we are bought with a price; life has been given a ransom for us, and our life is due to him "who died for us and rose again." I believe the Authorised Version is right in this rendering, and that it is a mistake to say, "who for our sakes died and rose again." The Resurrection has certainly significance in the work of Christ, but not in precisely the same way as His death; and Paul mentions it here, not to define its significance, but simply because he could not think of living except for One who was Himself alive.

One point deserves especial emphasis here--the universality of the expressions. Paul has been speaking of himself, and of the constraint which the love of Christ, as he apprehends it, exercises upon him. But he no sooner begins to define his thought of Christ's love than he passes over from the first person to the third. **The love of Christ was not to be limited; what it is to the Apostle it is to the world: He died for all, and so all died. Whatever blessing Christ's death contained, it contains for all. Whatever doom it exhausts and removes, it exhausts and removes for all. Whatever power it breaks, it breaks for all. Whatever ideal it creates, whatever obligation it imposes, it creates and imposes for all. There is not a soul in the world which is excluded from an interest in that knowledge-surpassing love which made our death its own. There is not one which ought not to feel that omnipotent constraint which enchained and swayed the strong, proud spirit of Paul. There is not one which ought not to be pouring out its life for Him who died in its place, and rose to receive its service.**

[45] The phanerothenai of the last judgment, ver. 10, has as good as taken place--for God.

[46] According to Winer exeste in Mark iii. 21 has the present sense = insanity; and so it might be with exestemen here. The verb occurs fifteen times in the New Testament, and except in these two passages has always the sense of being amazed or astonished beyond measure.

XV

THE NEW WORLD

"Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more. Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature [or, there is a new creation]: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new."--2 Cor. v. 16, 17 (R.V.).

The inferences which are here drawn depend upon what has just been said of Christ's death for all and the death of all in that death of His. In that death, as inclusive of ours, the old life died, and with it died all its distinctions. All that men were, apart from Christ, all that constituted the "appearance" (prosopon, ver. 12) of their life, all that marked them off from each other as such and such outwardly, ceased to have significance the moment Christ's death was understood as Paul

here understands it. He dates his inference with apo tou nun ("henceforth"). This does not mean from the time at which he writes, but from the time at which he saw that One had died for all, and so all died. Here, as in other places, he divides his life into "now" and "then," the Christian and the pre-Christian stage (Rom. v. 9; Eph. ii. 11-13). The transition from one to the other was revolutionary, and one of its most startling results is that which he here describes. "Then," the distinctions between men, the "appearances" in which they boasted, had been important in his eyes; "now," they have ceased to be, He [47] never asks whether a man is Jew or Greek, rich or poor, bond or free, learned or unlearned; these are classifications "after the flesh," and have died in Christ's death for all. To recognise them any longer, to admit the legitimacy of claims based upon them--such claims as his opponents in Corinth seem to have been putting forth--would be to make Christ's death, in a sense, of no effect. **It would be to deny that when He died for all, all died in Him; it would be to reanimate distinctions that should have been annihilated in His death.**

To this rule of knowing no one after the flesh Paul can admit no exception. Not even Christ is excepted. "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him so no more." This is a difficult saying, and has been very variously interpreted. The English reader inevitably supposes that Paul had known Christ "after the flesh," but had outgrown that kind of knowledge; and that he is intimating these two facts. But it is quite possible to take the words [48] as purely hypothetical: "Supposing us to have known even Christ after the flesh--a case which in point of fact was never ours--yet now we know Him so no more." Grammar does not favour this last rendering, though it does not preclude it; and however the matter may be settled, the bare supposition, as much as the fact, requires us to give a definite meaning to the words about knowing Christ after the flesh, and ceasing so to know Him.

Some have inferred from them that when Paul became a Christian, and for some time after, his conception of Christ had resembled that of the persons whom he is here controverting: his Christ had been to all intents and purposes a Jewish Messiah, and he had only been able by degrees to overcome, though he had at last overcome, the narrowness and nationalism of his early years as a disciple. To know Christ after the flesh would be to know Him in the character of a deliverer of the Jews: His Jewish descent, His circumcision, His observance of the Temple worship, His limitation of His ministry to the Holy Land, would be matters of great significance; and Jewish descent might naturally be supposed to establish a prerogative in relation to the Messiah for Jews as opposed to Gentiles. Probably there were Christians whose original conception of the Saviour was of this kind, and it is a fair enough description to say that this amounts only to a knowing of Christ after the flesh; but Paul can hardly have been one of them. His Christian knowledge of Christ dates from his vision of the Risen Lord on the way to Damascus, and in that appearance there was no room for anything that could be called "flesh." It was an appearance of the Lord of Glory. It determined all Paul's thoughts thenceforth. Nothing is more remarkable in his Epistles than the strong sense that what he calls his Gospel is one, unchanged, and unchangeable. It is not Yes and No. Neither man nor angel may modify it by preaching another Jesus than he preaches. He is quite unconscious of any such transformation of his Christology as is indicated above; and in the absence of any trace elsewhere of a change so important, it is impossible to read it into the verse before us.

Another interpretation of the words would make "knowing Christ after the flesh" refer to a knowledge at first hand of the facts and outward conditions of Christ's life in this world: a knowledge which Paul had in his early Christian days valued highly, but for which he no longer cared. There were numbers of men alive then who had known Christ in this sense. They had seen and heard Him in Galilee and Jerusalem; they

had much to tell about Him which would no doubt be very interesting to believers; and more than likely some of them emphasised this distinction of theirs, and were disposed to be pretentious on the strength of it. Whether Paul had ever known Christ in this sense, it is impossible to say. But it is certain that to such knowledge he would have assigned no Christian importance whatever. And in doing so, he would have been following the example of Christ Himself. "Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. And He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are." But it is impossible to suppose that this is a matter on which Paul as a Christian had ever needed to change his mind.

It is an interpretation in part akin to this which makes St. Paul here decry all knowledge of the historical Christ in comparison with the understanding of His death and resurrection. To know Christ after the flesh is in this case to know Him as He is represented in Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and Paul is supposed to say that, though narratives like these once had an interest and value for him, they really have it no longer: they are not essential to his Gospel, which is constituted by the death and resurrection alone. These great events and their consequences are all he is concerned with; to know Christ after the Evangelists is merely to know Him after the flesh; and flesh, even His flesh, ought to have no significance since His death.

It is a little difficult to take this quite seriously, though it has a serious side. St. Paul, no doubt, makes very few references to incidents in the life of our Lord, or even to words which He spoke. [49] But he is not singular in this. The Epistles of Peter and John are historically as barren as his. They do not add a word to the Gospel story; there is no new incident, no new trait in the picture of Jesus, no new oracle. Indeed, the only genuine addition to the record is that one made by Paul himself--"the word of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." The truth seems to be that it is not natural for an apostle, nor for any inspired man, to fall back on quotations, like a preacher gravelled for lack of matter, or conscious of wanting authority. Paul and his colleagues in apostleship had Christ living in them, and recognised the spirit by which they spoke as the spirit of their Master. So far as this was the case, it was certainly a matter of indifference to them whether they were acquainted with this or that incident in His life, with this or that syllable that He spoke on such and such an occasion. One casual occurrence, one scene in Christ's sufferings, one discourse which He delivered, would inevitably be known with more exact and literal precision to one person than to another; and there is no difficulty in believing that the casual advantage which any individual might thus possess was regarded by St. Paul as a thing of no Christian consequence. Similar differences exist still, and in principle are to be disregarded. But it is another thing to say that all knowledge of the historical Christ is irrelevant to Christianity, and yet another to father such an opinion on St. Paul. The attempt to do so is due in part, I believe, to a misinterpretation of kata sarka. Paul has been read as if what he disclaimed and decried were knowledge of Christ en sarki. But the two things are quite distinct. Christ lived in the flesh; but the life that He lived in the flesh He lived after the spirit, and when its spiritual import is regarded, it is safe to say that no one ever knew Christ as He was in the flesh--the Christ of Matthew, Mark, and Luke--better than Paul. No one had been initiated into Christ's character, as that character is revealed in the story of the Evangelists, more fully than he. No one ever knew the mind, the temper, the new moral ideal of Christianity, better than Paul, and there is no ultimate source for this knowledge but the historical Christ. Paul could not in his work as an evangelist preach salvation through the death and resurrection of an unknown person; the story which was the common property of the Church, and with which her catechists everywhere indoctrinated the new disciples, must have been

as familiar to him, in substance, as it is to us; and his evident knowledge and appreciation of the character embodied in it forbids us to think of this acquaintance with Christ as what he means by knowing Him after the flesh. He might have had the Gospel narratives by heart, and counted them inestimably precious, and yet have spoken exactly as he speaks here.

Nevertheless, this interpretation, though mistaken, has a certain truth in it. There is a historical knowledge of Christ which is a mere irrelevance to Christianity, and it has sometimes a stress laid upon it by its possessors which tempts one to speak of it in St. Paul's scornful tone. Many so-called "Lives" of Christ abound in it.

They aim at a historical realism which, to speak the plain truth, has simply no religious value. Knowledge of localities, customs, costumes, and so forth, is interesting enough; but if it should be ever so full and ever so exact, it is not the knowledge of Jesus Christ in any sense which makes a Gospel. It is quite possible, nay it is more than possible, that such knowledge may come between the soul and the Lord. It was so when Jesus lived. There were people who knew so well what He was like that they were blind to what He was. In St. Paul's phrase we may say that they knew Him "after the flesh," and it kept them from knowing Him truly. They asked, "Is not this the carpenter?" as if that were a piece of undeniable insight; and they were not conscious that only men blind to what He really was could ever have asked a question so absurd. It was not the carpenter who spoke with authority in the synagogues, and cast out devils, and brought in the kingdom; it was the Son of Man, the Son of God; and whether Paul meant it so or not, we may use his language in this passage to express the conviction, that one may really know Christ, to whom the whole outward aspect of His life, represented by "the carpenter of Nazareth," is indifferent; nay, that one cannot know Him in any real sense until these external things are indifferent. Or to put the same thing in other words, we may say that the knowledge of Christ which constitutes the Christian is not the knowledge of what He was, but of what he is; and if we know what He is, then all that is merely outward in the history may pass away.

But if none of these interpretations answers exactly to the Apostle's thought, where are we to seek the meaning of his words? All these, it will be observed, assume that Paul knew Christ "after the flesh," subsequent to his conversion; that he shared, as a Christian, views about Christ which he is now combating. As these interpretations, however, are untenable, we must assume that the time when he thus knew Christ was before his conversion. He could look back to days when his Messianic conceptions were carnal; when the Christ was to be identified, for him, by tokens in the domain of "appearance," or "flesh"; when He was to be a national, perhaps merely a political deliverer, and the Saviour of the Jews in a sense which gave them an advantage over the Gentiles. But these days were gone for ever. "Henceforth"--from the very instant that the truth flashed on him, One died for all, and so all died--they belonged to a past which could never be revived or recalled. One died for all: that means that Christ is Universal Redeemer. That same One rose again: that means He is Universal Lord. He has done the same infinite service for all, He makes the same infinite claim upon all; there are no prerogatives for any race, for any caste, for any individual men, in relation to Him. In presence of His cross, there is no difference: in His death, and in our death in Him, all carnal distinctions die; "henceforth we know no man after the flesh." Even kinship to Jesus "after the flesh" does not base any prerogative in the kingdom of God; even to have eaten and drunk in His presence, and listened to His living voice, confers no distinction there; He has not done more for His brethren and His companions than He has done for us all. And not only the carnal distinctions of men have vanished away; the carnal Jewish conception of Christ has vanished with them.

The seventeenth verse seems a new inference from the same ground as the fifteenth. Indeed, it connects so naturally with ver. 15 that one critic has suggested that ver. 16 is spurious, and another that it was a later insertion by the Apostle. Perhaps we may assume that St. Paul, who had no fear of such critics before his eyes, was capable of setting his sentences down just as they occurred to him, and did not mind an occasional awkwardness. When he writes "Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature," he is indeed drawing an inference from ver. 15, but he is at the same time generalising and carrying on the thought of ver. 16. The idea of the new creature occurs in other places in his writings (e.g., Eph. ii. 10; Gal. vi. 15), but both here and in Gal. vi. 15 I prefer the rendering in the margin of the Revised Version--"If any man is in Christ, there is a new creation: the things passed away (when he died in Christ); [50] behold, they have become new." We may say, if we please, that it is the new creature which makes the new creation; the change in the soul which revolutionises the world. **Still, it is this universal change which the Apostle, apparently, wishes to describe; and in the sudden note of triumph with which he concludes--"Behold! all is become new"--we feel, as it were, one throb of that glad surprise with which he had looked out on the world after God had reconciled him to Himself by His Son. The past was dead to him, as dead as Christ on His cross; all its ideas, all its hopes, all its ambitions, were dead; in Christ, he was another man in another universe.**

This is the first passage in 2 Corinthians in which this Pauline formula for a Christian--a man in Christ--is used. [51] It denotes the most intimate possible union, a union in which the believer's faith identifies him with Jesus in His death and resurrection, so that he can say, "I live no longer, but Christ liveth in me." It is the Apostle's profoundest word, not on the Gospel, but on the appropriation of the Gospel; not on Christ, but on the Christian religion. [52] It is mystical, as every true word must be which speaks of the relation of the soul to the Saviour; but it is intelligible to every one who knows what it is to trust and to love, and through trust and love to lose self in another whose life is greater and better than his own. And when we have seen, even for a moment, what it is to live in self or in the world, and what to live in Christ, we can easily believe that this union is equivalent to a re-creating and transfiguring of all things.

It is impossible to point to all the applications of this truth: "all things" is too wide a text. Every reader knows the things which bulked most largely in his life before he knew Christ, and it is easy for him to tell the difference due to being in the Lord. In a sense the new creation is in process as long as we live; it is ideally that faith in Christ means death in His death; ideally that with faith the old passes and the new is there; the actual putting away of the old, the actual production of the new, are the daily task of faith as it unites the soul to Christ. **We are in Him the moment faith touches Him, but we have to grow up into Him in all things. Only as we do so does the world change all around us, till the promise is fulfilled of new heavens and a new earth.**

But there is one application of these words, directly suggested by the context, which we ought not to overlook: I mean their application to men, and the old ways of estimating men. Those who are in Christ have died to the whole order of life in which men are judged "after the flesh." Perhaps the Christian Church has almost as much need as any other society to lay this to heart. We are still too ready to put stress upon distinctions which are quite in place in the world, but are without ground in Christ. Even in a Christian congregation there is a recognition of wealth, of learning, of social position, in some countries of race, which is not Christian. I do not say these distinctions are not real, but they are meaningless in relation to Christ, and ought not to be made. To make them narrows and impoverishes

the soul. If we associate only with people of a certain station, and because of their station, all our thoughts and feelings are limited to a very small area of human life; but if distinctions of station, of intelligence, of manners, are lost in the common relation to Christ, then life is open to us in all its length and breadth; all things are ours, because we are His. To be guided by worldly distinctions is to know only a few people, and to know them by what is superficial in their nature; but to see that such distinctions died in Christ's death, and to look at men in relation to Him who is Redeemer and Lord of all, is to know all our brethren, and to know them not on the surface, but to the heart. People lament everywhere the want of a truly social and brotherly feeling in the Church, and try all sorts of well-meant devices to stimulate it, but nothing short of this goes to the root of the matter. The social, in this universal sense, is dependent upon the religious. Those who have died in Christ to the world in which these separative distinctions reign will have no difficulty in recognising each other as one in Him. Society is transfigured for each of us when this union is accomplished; the old things have passed, and all has become new.

[47] The "we" in the first clause of ver. 16 is emphatic.

[48] As Heinrici does.

[49] See the excellent section on Paul and the Historical Christ in Sabatier's *The Apostle Paul* (English Translation, pp. 76-85).

[50] Observe the aorist *parelthen*.

[51] Chap. ii. 14, 17, and chap. iii. 14, are more limited.

[52] Perhaps the use of *en Christo* here may be determined by the wish to express tacitly his opposition to those who claimed to be in a special sense *tau Christou*. Paul's formula really asserts a much more intimate relation to Christ than theirs.

XVI

RECONCILIATION

"But all things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave unto us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation. We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating by us: we beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God. Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."--2 Cor. v. 18-21 (R.V.).

"Est hic insignis locus, si quis alius est in toto Paulo: proinde diligenter excutere singulas particulas convenit."--Calvin.

"If any man be in Christ," Paul has said, "there is a new creation; he is another man and lives in another world. But the new creation has the same Author as the original one: it is all of God, who reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and gave to us the ministry of reconciliation." It is plain from these last words that "us" does not mean Christians in general, but in the first instance Paul himself. He is a typical example of what it is to be in Christ; he understands what his own words mean--"the old things passed away; behold, they have become new"; he understands also how this stupendous change has been brought about. "It is due to God," he says, "who reconciled us to

Himself through Christ."

The great interest of this passage is its bearing upon the Christian doctrine of reconciliation, and before we go further it is necessary to explain precisely what this word means. It presupposes a state of estrangement. Now, a state of estrangement may be of two kinds: the feeling of alienation and hostility may exist upon one side only, or it may exist upon both. What, then, is the character of that state of estrangement which subsists between God and man independently of the Gospel, and which the Gospel, as a ministry of reconciliation, is designed to overcome? Is it one-sided, or two-sided? Is there something to be put away in man only, or something to be put away in God as well, before reconciliation is effected?

These questions have been answered very confidently in different ways. Many, especially in modern times, assert with passionate eagerness that the estrangement is merely one-sided. Man is alienated from God by sin, fear, and unbelief, and God reconciles him to Himself when He prevails with him to lay aside these evil dispositions, and trust Him as his Father and his Friend. "All things are of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ," would mean in this case, "All things are of God, who has won our friendship through His Son." That this describes in part the effect of the Gospel, no one will deny. It is one of its blessed results that fear and distrust of God are taken away, and that we learn to trust and love Him. Nevertheless, this is not what the New Testament means by reconciliation, though it is one of its fruits.

To St. Paul the estrangement which the Christian reconciliation has to overcome is indubitably two-sided; there is something in God as well as something in man which has to be dealt with before there can be peace. Nay, the something on God's side is so incomparably more serious that in comparison with it the something on man's side simply passes out of view. It is God's earnest dealing with the obstacle on His own side to peace with man which prevails on man to believe in the seriousness of His love, and to lay aside distrust. It is God's earnest dealing with the obstacle on His own side which constitutes the reconciliation; the story of it is "the word of reconciliation"; when men receive it, they receive (Rom. v. 10) the reconciliation. "Reconciliation" in the New Testament sense is not something which we accomplish when we lay aside our enmity to God; it is something which God accomplished when in the death of Christ He put away everything that on His side meant estrangement, so that He might come and preach peace. To deny this is to take St. Paul's Gospel away root and branch. He always conceives the Gospel as the revelation of God's wisdom and love in view of a certain state of affairs as subsisting between God and man. Now, what is the really serious element in this situation? What is it that makes a Gospel necessary? What is it that the wisdom and love of God undertake to deal with, and do deal with, in that marvellous way which constitutes the Gospel? Is it man's distrust of God? is it man's dislike, fear, antipathy, spiritual alienation? Not if we accept the Apostle's teaching. The serious thing which makes the Gospel necessary, and the putting away of which constitutes the Gospel, is God's condemnation of the world and its sin; it is God's wrath, "revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. i. 16-18). The putting away of this is "reconciliation": the preaching of this reconciliation is the preaching of the Gospel.

Much impatience has been shown in the criticism of this conception. Clever men have exhibited their talent and courage by calling it "heathenish"; and others have undertaken to apologise for St. Paul by describing this objection as "modern." I cannot understand how any one should feel entitled either to flout the Apostle on this matter, or to take him under his patronage. If any one ever had the sense to distinguish between what is real and unreal in regard to God, between what is true and false spiritually, it was he; even with Ritschl on one

side and Schmiedel on the other he is not dwarfed, and may be permitted to speak for himself. The wrath of God, the condemnation of God resting on the sinful world, are not, whatever speculative theologians may think, unreal things: neither do they belong only to ancient times. They are the most real things of which human nature has any knowledge till it receives the reconciliation. They are as real as a bad conscience; as real as misery, impotence, and despair. And it is the glory of the Gospel, as St. Paul understood it, that it deals with them as real. It does not tell men that they are illusions, and that only their own groundless fear and distrust have ever stood between them and God. It tells them that God has dealt seriously with these serious things for their removal, that awful as they are He has put them away by an awful demonstration of His love; it tells them that God has made peace at an infinite cost, and that the priceless peace is now freely offered to them.

When St. Paul says that God has given him the ministry of reconciliation, he means that he is a preacher of this peace. He ministers reconciliation to the world. His work has no doubt a hortatory side, as we shall see, but that side is secondary. It is not the main part of his vocation to tell men to make their peace with God, but to tell them that God has made peace with the world. At bottom, the Gospel is not good advice, but good news. All the good advice it gives is summed up in this--Receive the good news. But if the good news be taken away; if we cannot say, God has made peace, God has dealt seriously with His condemnation of sin, so that it no longer stands in the way of your return to Him; if we cannot say, Here is the reconciliation, receive it,--then for man's actual state we have no Gospel at all.

In the nineteenth verse St. Paul explains more fully the way in which he is looking at the subject: [53] "to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation." The English Authorised Version puts a comma at Christ: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." It is safe to say that "God was in Christ" is a sentence which neither St. Paul nor any other New Testament writer could have conceived; the "was" and the "reconciling" must be taken together, and "in Christ" is practically equivalent to "through Christ" in the previous verse--God was by means of Christ reconciling the world to Himself. "Reconciling," of course, must be taken in the sense already explained. The sentence does not mean that God was trying to convert men, or to prevail with them to lay aside their enmity, but that He was disposing of everything that on His part made peace impossible. When Christ's work was done, the reconciliation of the world was accomplished. When men were called to receive it, they were called to a relation to God; not in which they would no more be against Him--though that is included--but in which they would no more have Him against them (Hofmann). There would be no condemnation thenceforth to those who were in Christ Jesus.

The connexion of the words "not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation," is rather difficult. The last clause certainly refers to something which took place after the work of reconciliation had been wrought; Paul was commissioned to tell the story of it. It seems most probable that the other is co-ordinate with this, so that both are in a sense the evidence for the main proposition. It is as if he had said: "God was by means of Christ establishing friendly relations between the world and Himself, as appears from this, that He does not reckon their trespasses unto them, [54] and has made us preachers of His grace." The very universality of the expression--reconciling a world to Himself--is consistent only with an objective reconciliation. It cannot mean that God was overcoming the world's enmity (though that is the ulterior object) it means that God was putting away His own condemnation and

wrath. When this was done, He could send, and did send, men to declare that it was done; and among these men, none had a profounder appreciation of what God had wrought, and what he himself had to declare as God's glad tidings, than the Apostle Paul.

This is the point we reach in ver. 20: "We are ambassadors therefore on behalf of Christ, as though God were intreating you by us; we beseech you, on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God." The Apostle has just told us that all is of God, but all is at the same time "in Christ," or "through Christ." Hence it is on Christ's behalf he comes forward; it is the furtherance of Christ's interests he has at heart. Nay, it is that same interest which is at the heart of the Father, who desires now to glorify the Son; so that when Paul appeals to men on Christ's behalf it is as though God Himself entreated them. Most expositors notice the amazing contrast between *presbeuomen* ("we are ambassadors") and *deometha* ("we beseech you"). The ambassador, as a rule, stands upon his dignity; he maintains the greatness of the person whom he represents. But Paul in this lowly passionate entreaty is not false to his Master; he is preaching the Gospel in the spirit of the Gospel; he shows that he has really learned of Christ; the very conception of the ambassador descending to entreaty is, as Calvin says, an incomparable commendation of the grace of Christ. One can imagine how Saul the Pharisee would have spoken on God's behalf; with what rigour, what austerity, what unbending, uncompromising assurance. But old things have passed away; behold, they have become new. This single verse illumines, as by a lightning flash, the new world into which the Gospel has translated Paul, the new man it has made of him. The fire that burned in Christ's heart has caught hold in his; his soul is tremulous with passion; he is conscious of the grandeur of his calling, yet there is nothing that he would not do to win men for his message. It would go to his heart like a sword if he had to take up the old lament, "Who hath believed our report?" In his dignity as Christ's ambassador and as the mouthpiece of God, in his humility, in his passionate earnestness, in the urgency and directness of his appeal, St. Paul is the supreme type and example of the Christian minister. In the passage before us he presents the appeal of the Gospel in its simplest form: wherever he stands before men on Christ's behalf his prayer is, "Be ye reconciled unto God." And once more we must insist on the apostolic import of these words. It is the misleading nuance of "reconcile" in English that makes so many take them as if they meant, "Lay aside your enmity to God; cease to regard Him with distrust, hatred, and fear"; in other words, "Show yourselves His friends." In St. Paul's lips they cannot possibly mean anything but, "Accept His offered friendship; enter into that peace which He has made for the world through the death of His Son; believe that He has at infinite cost put away all that on His part stood between you and peace; receive the reconciliation."

The Received Text and the Authorised Version attach the twenty-first verse to this exhortation by *gar* ("for"): "For Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf." The "for" is spurious, and though it is not inept the sentence gains greatly in impressiveness by its omission. The Apostle does not point out the connexion for us: in simply declaring the manner in which God reconciled the world to Himself--the process by which, the cost at which, He made peace--he leaves us to feel how vast is the boon which is offered to us in the Gospel, how tremendous the responsibility of rejecting it. To refuse "the reconciliation" is to condemn the death in which the Sinless One was made sin on our behalf.

This wonderful sentence is the inspired commentary on the statement of ver. 15--"One died for all." It takes us into the very heart of the Apostolic Gospel. Just because it does so, it has always been felt to be of critical importance, alike by those who welcome and by those who reject it; it condenses and concentrates in itself the attraction of

Christ and the offence of Christ. It is a counsel of despair to evade it. It is not the puzzle of the New Testament, but the ultimate solution of all puzzles; it is not an irrational quantity that has to be eliminated or explained away, but the key-stone of the whole system of apostolic thought. It is not a blank obscurity in revelation, a spot of impenetrable blackness; it is the focus in which the reconciling love of God burns with the purest and intensest flame; it is the fountain light of all day, the master light of all seeing, in the Christian revelation. Let us look at it more closely.

God, we must observe in the first place, is the subject. "All" is of him in the work of reconciliation, and this above all, that He made the Sinless One to be sin. I have read a book on the Atonement which quoted this sentence three times, or rather misquoted it, never once recognising that an action of God is involved. But without this, there is no coherence in the Apostle's thoughts at all. Without this, there would be no explanation of reconciliation as God's work. God reconciled the world to Himself--made peace into which the world might enter--in making Christ sin on its behalf. What precisely this means we shall inquire further on; but it is essential to remember, whatever it mean, that God is the doer of it.

Observe next the description of Christ--"Him that knew no sin." The Greek negative (me), as Schmiedel remarks, implies that this is regarded as the verdict of some one else than the writer. It was Christ's own verdict upon Himself. He whose words search our very hearts, and bring to light unsuspected seeds of badness, never Himself betrays the faintest consciousness of guilt. He challenges His enemies directly: "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" It is the verdict of all sincere human souls, as uttered by the soldier who watched His cross--"Truly this was a righteous man." It is the verdict even of the great enemy who assailed Him again and again, and found nothing in Him, and whose agents recognised Him as the Holy One of God. Above all, it is the verdict of God. He was the beloved Son, in whom the Father was well pleased. For three-and-thirty years, in daily contact with the world and its sins, Christ lived and yet knew no sin. To His will and conscience it was a foreign thing. What infinite worth that sinless life possessed in God's sight! When He looked down to earth it was the one absolutely precious thing. Filled full of righteousness, absolutely well-pleasing in His eyes, it was worth more to God than all the world beside.

Now, God reconciled the world to Himself--He made a peace which could be proclaimed and offered to the world--when, all sinless as Christ was, He made Him to be sin on our behalf. What does this mean? Not, exactly, that He made Him a sin-offering on our behalf. The expression for a sin-offering is distinct (*peri hamartias*), and the parallelism with *dikaiosune* in the next clause forbids that reference here. The sin-offering of the Old Testament can at most have pointed towards and dimly suggested so tremendous an utterance as this; and the profoundest word of the New Testament cannot be adequately interpreted by anything in the Old. When St. Paul says, "Him that knew no sin God made sin," he must mean that in Christ on His cross, by divine appointment, the extremest opposites met and became one--incarnate righteousness and the sin of the world. The sin is laid by God on the Sinless One; its doom is laid on Him; His death is the execution of the divine sentence upon it. When He dies, He has put away sin; it no longer stands, as it once stood, between God and the world. On the contrary, God has made peace by this great transaction; He has wrought out reconciliation; and its ministers can go everywhere with this awful appeal: "Receive the reconciliation; Him who knew no sin God hath made sin on our behalf, and there is henceforth no condemnation to them that are in Christ."

No one who has felt the power of this appeal will be very anxious to defend the Apostolic Gospel from the charges which are sometimes made

against it. When he is told that it is impossible for the doom of sin to fall on the Sinless One, and that even if it were conceivable it would be frightfully immoral, he is not disquieted. He recognises in the moral contradictions of this text the surest sign that the secret of the Atonement is revealed in it: he feels that God's work of reconciliation necessarily involves such an identification of sinlessness and sin. He knows that there is an appalling side to sin, and he is ready to believe that there is an appalling side to redemption also--a side the most distant sight of which makes the proudest heart quail, and stops every mouth before God. He knows that the salvation which he needs must be one in which God's mercy comes through, and not over, His judgment; and this is the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. But without becoming controversial on a subject on which more than on any other the temper of controversy is unseemly, reference may be made to the commonest form of objection to the apostolic doctrine, in the sincere hope that some one who has stumbled at that doctrine may see it more truly. The objection I refer to discredits propitiation in the alleged interest of the love of God. "We do not need," the objectors say, "to propitiate an angry God. This is a piece of heathenism, of which a Christian ought to be ashamed. It is a libel on the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose name is love, and who waits to be gracious." What are we to say to such words, which are uttered as boldly as if there were no possible reply, or rather as if the Apostles had never written, or had been narrow-minded unreceptive souls, who had not only failed to understand their Master, but had taught with amazing perversity the very opposite of what He taught on the most essential of all points--the nature of God and His relation to sinful men? We must say this. It is quite true that we have not to propitiate an offended God: the very fact upon which the Gospel proceeds is that we cannot do any such thing. But it is not true that no propitiation is needed. As truly as guilt is a real thing, as truly as God's condemnation of sin is a real thing, a propitiation is needed. And it is here, I think, that those who make the objection referred to part company, not only with St. Paul, but with all the Apostles. God is love, they say, and therefore He does not require a propitiation. God is love, say the Apostles, and therefore He provides a propitiation. Which of these doctrines appeals best to the conscience? Which of them gives reality, and contents, and substance, to the love of God? Is it not the apostolic doctrine? Does not the other cut out and cast away that very thing which made the soul of God's love to Paul and John? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.... Him that knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf." That is how they spoke in the beginning of the Gospel, and so let us speak. Nobody has any right to borrow the words "God is love" from an apostle, and then to put them in circulation after carefully emptying them of their apostolic import. Still less has any one a right to use them as an argument against the very thing in which the Apostles placed their meaning. But this is what they do who appeal to love against propitiation. To take the condemnation out of the Cross is to take the nerve out of the Gospel; it will cease to hold men's hearts with its original power when the reconciliation which is preached through it contains the mercy, but not the judgment of God. Its whole virtue, its consistency with God's character, its aptness to man's need, its real dimensions as a revelation of love, depend ultimately on this, that mercy comes to us in it through judgment.

In the last words of the passage the Apostle tells us the object of this great interposition of God: "He made Christ to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Our condemnation is made His; it is accepted, exhausted, annihilated, on His cross; and when we receive the reconciliation--when we humble ourselves to be forgiven and restored at this infinite cost--there is no longer condemnation for us: we are justified by our faith, and have

peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what is meant by becoming the righteousness of God in Him. It is not, as the very next sentence suggests, all that is included in the Christian salvation, but it is all that the words themselves contain. "In Him" has all promise in it, as well as the present possession of reconciliation, with which the Christian life begins; but it is this present possession, and not the promise involved in it, which St. Paul describes as the righteousness of God. In Christ, that Christ who died for us, and in Him in virtue of that death which by exhausting condemnation put away sin, we are accepted in God's sight.

[53] This seems to be the force of hos: it is a violent supposition that it means "since," or "for," and that hoti is a marginal interpretation of it which has crept into the text.

[54] This makes logizomenos a true present, not an imperfect participle. It quite dislocates the sentence if it is co-ordinated with katallasson, and not with themenos.
