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Introduction.

The attentive reader of the Bible will hardly fail to notice that in the first letter to the Corinthian church conditions of a most alarming kind are uncovered and strongly rebuked. The picture of the spiritual low level sketched here by the apostle is probably not reached or even surpassed in any other letter, except for the last of the seven epistles to the church of Laodicea in the book of Revelation.

And how does the apostle meet such sad conditions in that church torn apart by divisions, severely damaged by dangerous heresies and denials of divine revelation truths, corroded by outrageous immorality? Certainly, he does not spare them. The harshest rebuke, the sharpest rebuke, the most serious discipline is applied, as it should be. But what is very striking is the fact that the Holy Spirit, through the pen of the apostle, pours into the lap of this so carnal church a veritable cornucopia of the most delicious knowledge and secrets. This is not even humanly conceived or acted. We would be much more inclined to hang the bread basket with spiritual food a little higher for such a congregation, to give them only the most elementary food, the most basic necessities, and to make them understand in this way that only after they have improved can there be any talk of a more distant introduction into the depths of God in Christ.

Let us only briefly mention the decisive rejection of all human philosophy and the rich communications about the wisdom of God hidden from the world, which the church of God received through the Holy Spirit given to her, who guides her into the depths of the Godhead. To the glory (chapter 3) that all is yours because you are of the Christ and Christ is God. To the indescribably high calling of believers to execute judgment over the world and over the angels, and the true dignity of human corporeality as the temple of the Holy Spirit (chapter 6). On the in-depth instruction on idolatrous sacrifices and the Lord's Table (chs. 8-11). On the various spiritual gifts and the wonderful unity and organic unity of the whole body of Christ (chap. 12). On the unsurpassed song of love in ch. 13 and the rich teaching of the spiritual gifts in ch. 14.

Worthy of this is the chapter on the resurrection of the dead, which is presented to us for special consideration, and which gives us a glimpse of the very farthest and most comprehensive goals of God with all His creation that has fallen into death.

Truly, such a disciplinary procedure of our God and Savior demands from us the deepest admiration and thanksgiving from the dust. Nor does it suffer from any doubt that the apostolic procedure has proved to be thoroughly practical and effective, as a careful use of the second letter clearly reveals. Let us now turn to the wording and content of our chapter.

Verse 1-2: "But I call your attention, brethren, to the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain."

In these and the following verses, the apostle himself provides us with a concise and reliable account of the nature and content of the gospel he preached to the nations. We get information both about what distinguishes his gospel from that of the other apostles to the circumcision, but especially about

the deep gulf that separates it eternally from all earlier and modern counterfeits and surrogates of the true gospel.

As far as the difference between Paul's gospel to the nations, who had no covenant relationship with God, and the gospel of the Twelve to the people of Israel, to whom the Messianic promises had been made, is concerned, it is obvious that in the proclamation of the latter the reference to the faithful fulfillment of the promises made by God in the sending of the Son in the flesh from the seed of David had to take an important place. This is also clearly evident in the first offer of salvation to the Jewish people in Acts 2 and 3. For the apostles of Christ Jesus to the nations, there was no such necessity, since the nations did not have the ground of a certain messianic expectation.

Of much greater importance, however, is that we clearly recognize how deep and wide the gulf is between the Pauline proclamation of salvation and the numerous false gospels which, in the course of time, and especially in our day, are spreading with great audacity in pulpits and cathedrals as the actual "original" gospel of Christ Himself, of which our apostle is not afraid to be accused of being a "forger". The decisive fact is that Paul begins his Gospel of Christ not at Bethlehem, and that he does not indulge in descriptions of the historical Christ "according to the flesh", but he begins with Golgotha, i.e. exactly there, where the modern Gospels, which cannot do enough in brilliant and eloquent praises of the life of Jesus on earth, lose the ground under their feet. For they simply do not know what to do with the Crucified and Risen One. Whereas Paul, in his second letter to the Corinthians (-5:16), flatly declares, "And though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet therefore we know him no more."

For us Gentile believers, it is of utmost importance that we give a clear account of the way in which alone access to the Father has been secured to us in the same way as to the heirs of the original Christ promises, the Israelites. In no way or understanding by any act of Jesus from the days of his flesh, or by any Old Testament prophecy, however important, fulfilled by him, given to Israel, but first and last by the blood of Christ shed on Calvary alone. As Paul testifies in Eph. 2:13: "But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been made near through the blood of Christ. If believing Christianity had not been erroneously educated and trained for centuries to regard itself constantly as a "spiritual Israel," its understanding of this important point concerning its position in the divine household would not have been so easily dampened and clouded. She would have had quite another weapon in her hand to resist such counterfeits and resolutely show them the door.

The congregation, the one crucified and risen with Christ, can and must never find its footing and its right to exist on any other ground than that of Golgotha, because there is simply no other for it. If it is not one with its Head in death and one in His victorious resurrection, then it has no right at all to the Anointed One, nor to His Father in heaven. She has no claim to the fulfillment of divine promise, for the very obvious reason that God never made Himself obligatory to the Gentiles in this way. We were outside the covenants, without God and without hope in the world. Through Christ's blood, however, we have been brought just as close to the heart and salvation of God as the most genuine son of Israel.

Paul himself had preached this gospel to the Corinthians and they had accepted it. Thereby they had become partakers of the new life in the Risen One and members of His wonderful body. Also, the apostle does not shy away from calmly acknowledging: "in which you also stand", although he had to reprove their spiritual status very much and sharply. But this was not a recognition of their own achievement in the religious field, but only the glory of his gospel, i.e. of the glorious, mighty Lord, who helped them to such a state of grace through his gospel.

"By which also ye are saved." This remains the blessed gospel, the power of God to save all those who believe in it, no matter how precarious their spiritual life may be afterwards. It is not as if a holy and godly walk in faith is not important. For the apostle clearly warns against this also here by the phrase: "if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you." But it is not our later conduct that gives the word of the cross its wonderfully saving power, but a sanctified life flows forth only from living faith in the

Crucified One. One must not confuse the root of the tree of divine planting with the delicious fruit. Plant a good tree, and the fruit will be good; this is and remains the basic law of the new life.

"Unless you had believed in vain." A peculiar word. I wonder what Paul might have meant by it. Can one believe in vain at all? But probably only under the incomprehensible assumption that one would have been deceived by God concerning the power inherent in the gospel, in other words, that the whole great event of God for the salvation of a lost world would be a single, magnificent deception, a proclamation of divine intentions of grace and salvation, behind which lay nothing but human rapture and imagination. It is an enormous dilemma that the apostle confronts the Corinthians with these words, but which at the same time bears witness to the authenticity and divinity of the gospel entrusted to him. No one can speak in this way who is not certain of his divine calling and mission par excellence.

3. "For I delivered to you as the chief thing that I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."

This, then, is for our apostle, as we noted above in the introductory words, the most distinguished thing about his message of salvation. It is the fundamental facts on which his whole sermon is based. Without the man Jesus, the anointed one, who truly died and was laid in the tomb as an unseparated body, and who also truly and bodily came forth from the empty tomb through resurrection, there is no gospel at all for our apostle. If you take that away from him, you take everything away from him. And at the same time he refers to the scriptures for these fundamental deeds of God in the anointed Son of Man, which testify to this, an appeal that was of great importance especially for the many believers from Israel in the Corinthian church.

The resounding power and importance of the real death of Jesus of Nazareth for Paul's presentation of salvation is very obvious to every careful reader of his letter to the Romans, especially of the sixth chapter. His whole presentation of evidence falls out of the ground, if the death of Christ was only an apparent death, a fictitious one, and not bodily real and genuine.

Also his special reference to the burial of the Lord Jesus is not inconsequential, because many of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the processes which took place and did not take place at the dead body of the crucified are tied to this act. In the prophets and psalms it is mentioned with much circumlocution and precision how his hands and feet would be dug through, but not a bone would be broken in his body; how his grave would be appointed with the wicked, but his body would be laid in the tomb of a rich man, so that in the completely new tomb, in which no dead man had ever before lain and decomposed, no trace of decomposition could touch his body, because it was written: "Thou wilt not suffer thy Holy One to see decomposition." All these details are completely irrelevant if the Spirit of God did not want to place the greatest emphasis on the way in which the body of Jesus was treated, and indeed for no other purpose than to show us in the most definite way that the resurrection was precisely about this genuinely human corpse or body, which in the grave was to experience and did experience the most wonderful, most magnificent and most momentous demonstration of divine power and glory. To speak of a purely spiritual resurrection of Jesus, in which his human corporeality, originating from the dust of the earth, his real human flesh and bones, would have had no part at all, means to empty and invalidate the whole biblical truth of the resurrection. This is the greatest deed of God, that this mortal body, which in its original disposition was created in the image of God, and which has now become a temple of the indwelling holy spirit of God, is prepared by the divine omnipotence to become a perfect organ and vessel of the spirit of glory by revival, not back into the former corruptible, soulish, natural life lying in blood, but in such a way that the resurrected one becomes a life-giving spirit. But not a bodiless spirit, a shadow or phantom, but the full expression of the image of the invisible God, and its highest form of manifestation. About it in the further still more.

The reference to the fact that this took place on the third day, according to the Scriptures, is also not unnecessary. Repeatedly in the prophecy the symbolic meaning of the third day is emphasized. A not small number of types and silhouettes contain clear hints about it. Thus the sacrifice of Isaac by his obedient father Abraham, to whom God restored his son, as good as slaughtered, on the third day, alive from the dead, as an example, as Heb. 11, 19 emphasizes. In the same way, the prophet Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights, which the Master himself calls a shadowing of his imminent resurrection on the third day (Matth. 12, 40). A particularly noteworthy reference to this is found in the prophet Hosea, chap. 1, 2: "Come, let us turn back to the Lord! He has torn us, he will also heal us; he has wounded us, he will also bind us up. After two days he will make us alive, on the third day he will raise us up to live before him". We can see with what punctuality and precision our God keeps the times and hours that He Himself has set, even if He does not always put us in a position to be able to calculate them with certainty. He never errs in this, and we may trust him implicitly. In his time he will bring everything out well and gloriously.

5-8: "That he appeared unto Cephas, and afterward unto the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still alive, but some of whom have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. But last of all he appeared also to me, who am like unto an untimely birth."

This enumeration of the various appearances of the risen Lord cannot and will not claim to be complete. We know from the gospels of a number of appearances of Jesus after his resurrection, which are not mentioned here, and which could not be unknown to the apostle. The main emphasis lies in any case on the very important, all justified requirements on evidential value completely sufficient quantity of partly still living witnesses of his true resurrection from the dead. No event in the life of Jesus is better attested than his death and his subsequent bodily resurrection. That is why also the apostle John emphasizes briefly, but with great emphasis : "The life has appeared". The factual proof is brought to the fullest that our God is the one who alone can make alive from the dead, and who in the Lord Jesus has brought life and incorruption to light. This is the exuberant greatness of his power, which he made effective and fluid in Christ, since he raised him from the dead. Now the whole of God's purpose, which encompasses all created things that are subject to death, is guaranteed and secured against every conceivable failure for all eternity. No enemy, no corrupter can ever rise against the invincible power of the resurrected one.

A word about the apostle's peculiar designation of himself as of an "untimely birth" might still be in place. We do not suppose that he used this expression with the flavor of any criticism of the divine procedure with him in this matter, as if it had been something premature or immature that had happened to him on the way to Damascus and in the temple at Jerusalem, when the Lord appeared to him. Rather, we assume that this word refers to the fact that Paul, in his whole attitude towards the Lord, was the representative of his people in a very special way. He embodied, as it were, the whole blinded enmity, the whole blind hatred and persecution mania of the Jews against Jesus and his disciples from Israel. He clearly confronts us in the Acts of the Apostles as the type of the Satan-inspired Phariseeism of his people in their rejection of God's anointed. And it is precisely him that the Risen Lord seizes and overpowers and makes of him a chosen armament for the proclamation of His name among the nations and among His people Israel. And what Israel should have become from the very beginning, the light bearer of God to the world of nations, this one and only Paul becomes, while his people as a whole sinks into the eerie night of hardening. Thus, he is an early birth as far as his called people are concerned, whose later reinstatement in God's favor and grace for the greater salvation of the nations is emphasized and proven by no one in the New Testament than precisely by Paul in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. It is as if he wants us to understand that if God has accomplished this with me, then nothing is too difficult or even impossible for him in this line for all my people.

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9-11: "For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me has not been in vain, but I have labored more than they all; not I, but the grace of God which is with me. But whether it be I, or they, so we preach, and so ye have believed."

In these words we have the factual evidence that Paul had really not been exalted of the high revelations that had come to him through the Risen Lord. The remembrance of the grace that had befallen him had humbled him deeply and bowed him in the dust before God, against whose anointed he had so terribly sinned by persecuting its body, the church. For this reason, he appears to be the least of the apostles, indeed, not worthy to be called an apostle. This is true humility, wrought by God, but it in no way causes him to think less of his true calling to the ministry and work of an apostle, or even to question it. Rather, he emphasizes emphatically, but without any self-conceit, how much he appreciates that grace has enabled him to work much more than the other apostles. It is false humility and unspirituality if, in a similar situation, one allows oneself to be tempted to reject the opportunities and gifts offered by God for blessed and fruitful service to others, or to excuse oneself with one's own inability to do so. For it is grace alone that makes one capable and provides all ability for the fulfillment of the task set and well recognized by God. Genuine humility goes hand in hand with a clear and sober recognition and appreciation of the vocation assumed by the Lord to cooperate in the great work of God in His humanity.

Thus, it is not immodesty or presumption that makes the apostle say that he has worked more than the other apostles of the Lord. It is quite far from him to want to elevate himself at their expense or to claim greater fame than they. Things were clearly as neither Paul nor the Twelve had arranged or ordered them, but only the sovereign Lord over all, who placed his own people Israel in the night of hardening for judgment until the time of their visitation for restoration, and who thus took from the apostles of the circumcision of himself every possibility of filling even the cities of Israel with the gospel for the purpose of national conversion and rebirth on this side of his own return from heaven. This is how he predicted it to them when he sent them out with authority (Matth. 10, 23). Accordingly, we also see the Jerusalemite mother church in its full, fresh strength on the height of true, spiritual knowledge of the new divine household in relation to the nations and the ministry of Paul among them, in the middle of the Acts of the Apostles as if in a sinking from the scene. In their place comes the efficacy of Paul, uniquely called by the exalted Lord from heaven to the apostleship, and of his assistants among the Gentiles. That they will one day, in the days of the Son of Man, resume their own original calling among Israel and carry out to the victorious end national conversion of Israel, is not subject to the slightest doubt. The existence of a rich epistolary literature to the believers from the circumcision alone, as it follows the Pauline letters in the canon of the New Testament, vouches for this. And so the Jewish-Christian congregations of the last days, which will certainly come into being when "the time of the nations" approaches its fulfillment, will also interpret those letters in a completely different way than we were able to, and will probably also find the right key for the solution of the many riddles which the book of Revelation still poses to us, which, as is acknowledged, bears a much more intensely Jewish-colored character than the Gospel according to Matthew and the Epistle to the Hebrews taken together.

And so it was God's grace alone that enabled this Paul and made it possible for him to proclaim to his people Israel in advance among the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of the Anointed One, which was actually Israel's national calling, since it is written: "I have also set you as a light of the nations. Then there opened up to him and his fellow apostles an incomparably greater and more extensive activity than to the twelve. And grace enabled him to pursue these worldwide opportunities with great zeal and devoted fidelity. The glory for this, however, does not belong to him, but to the wonderful grace of God, which he praises.

"But whether it be I or they, we preach, and so ye have believed". With this he comes back to the topic of his explanations about the Risen Lord. Whoever is looking for a dichotomy or contrast between the gospel of Paul and the proclamation of the twelve does not get his money's worth. There are certainly significant differences between the gospel of the future kingdom, as the Twelve had to preach it, and the gospel of the present presentation of the Sonship among all peoples by our Apostle. But it is in both of these that the Risen Lord alone both vouchsafes the future Messianic kingdom on earth and, through the Holy Spirit, prepares and completes today a congregation of true, legitimate sons and heirs of God and co-heirs with the Anointed One to His day. Therefore our apostle and witness of the resurrection of Christ from the dead may and must justifiably refer to the complete agreement which existed and had to exist in this piece among all called apostles of the Lord.

Verse 12-18: "But if Christ is preached that he rose from the dead, how do some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there really is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not risen either! But if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is in vain, and your faith is also in vain. We would also be found false witnesses of God, because we have testified against God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise, since the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ has not risen either. But if Christ is not raised, then your faith is vain; if you are still in your sins, then even those who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If we hope in Christ alone for this life, we are the most miserable of all men."

With this passage the apostle begins his grandiose demonstration of the fundamental and outstanding truth of the true raising of Christ from the dead. And in doing so, he obviously follows a procedure that is too little observed in our country. As a rule, we mostly follow the argumentation also used by the apostle, that if Christ was not raised, not only his preaching would be in vain, but also the whole edifice of our life of faith would be without foundation and support. But Paul speaks of this only in the second place. In the foreground stands with him something completely different, namely the substantiation and substantiation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ with the establishment of the divine decree of the resurrection of the dead in general. For the apostle, the whole reliability and reality of what happened to Jesus rests on the universal law of divine activity for the salvation of a lost world and mankind, namely, to hand over to death all creatures alienated and lost from God, in order to bring them back to themselves in incorruption and incorruption by raising the dead. To our apostle, in clear contrast to all moderns, Jesus was born only in order to die and then to be raised. Just like in the letter to the Hebrews: "Since the children (chosen and ordained by God) have flesh and blood in common, he likewise became partaker of the same, so that through death (which is only possible through death) he might put an end to the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14). Likewise, another scripture declares that it has included everything under sin - and thus under death - "so that the promise might be given through faith in Jesus, the Anointed One, to those who believe (Gal. 3:22). And Romans 11 testifies that God has included all, Jews and Gentiles, under unbelief, that he might have mercy on all.

Thus the fact of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead lies absolutely on the firm underground of an eternal counsel of God to set an effective goal to all death being penetrated into his creation somehow and sometime by raising the dead. And the resurrection of His Son, who appeared in the flesh, is only the first great test of God's revelation of glory, which guarantees everything else. As then also Col. 1, 18 is explained of Him, the head of the body, the church: "He who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might be first (have the preeminence)." Accordingly, Paul can and must also conclude later in this chapter: "For as in the Adam all die, even so in the Christ shall all be made alive." The counsel of God for the general raising of the dead in general finds in the raising of the anointed one, the son of the virgin, only its concrete and all following guaranteeing beginning and exit. Thus the resurrection of Jesus no longer appears only as an indescribably great means in the hand of God for the execution of his thoughts of salvation–and glory, but our gaze is directed to the purpose of

grace, encompassing the whole created universe and reaching back into the eternities, for the final elimination of all corruption, which sin has brought, by raising the dead. It is our great Savior God's universal remedy for all that is called death in the whole realm of His creation.

And only after the apostle has given the resurrection of Christ this broadest, most certain foundation: If there is no raising of the dead at all, then Christ has not risen either -, he moves on to our life of faith and hope with his conclusion.

This view is so important to him and of such importance that he says: "We would be found to be false witnesses if we testified against God that he had raised Christ, whom he could not have raised in reality, since the dead do not rise at all," i.e. if the whole all-encompassing counsel of God for the final elimination of death from his whole creation by raising the body is nothing. From all his epistles one has to realize what pieces just this apostle held on his calling to be a witness of God's truth in Christ, in order to be able to appreciate the whole weight of such a statement. Thus, when he writes to the Galatians, "If we also, or an angel from heaven, preached gospel apart from that which we preached to you, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8, 9)." For a man with such a view and accountability for his witnessing service to God, the thought of false witness against the true and holy God is simply incomprehensible. The fact that he does not shrink from drawing this extreme conclusion reveals how deeply his own soul was penetrated by the unconditional truthfulness and reliability of this most mighty act of God accomplished in Jesus' body.

And only now, after he has dismissed every possible objection against the force of his testimony of the resurrection of the dead as the basic law of divine salvation, he goes on to explain the fatal consequences of a denial of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such a denial would make faith vain, void, insubstantial and powerless. For faith for salvation has to do and must have to do with a living God, must count on him, must be able to rely on him without fail. Otherwise it never has value or meaning. But only that God is a living God in the full sense of the word, who has measured himself against every power of death and has won the victory, i.e. who has become master of death forever and completely by overcoming and devouring it completely through the fullness of his immortal being. And this could effectively happen only in the incarnate Word of the living God, who, in the likeness of true frail humanity, truly tasted death and was then victoriously delivered from it forever through resurrection. Therefore he can now say: "Behold, I was dead and am alive forever and ever, and have the key, that is, the unlimited power, of Hades and of death (Rev. 1:18)".

"So you are still in your sins." This is a test of the example, and a delicious one at that. The power of sin is undisputed as far as the children of Adam dwell. There is none that doeth good, not even one. They have all gone astray and become unfit, they are all sinners and lack glory with God (Rom. 3, 23). Nor is any human power able to deliver from the bondage and vile slavery of sin. The holy and perfect law is powerless against sin, it only makes it more sinful, more deadly in its effects, it is the very power (1 Cor. 15:56). Thus, the holy God with His great council of love faces a human world dead in sins and transgressions. Is there a way to freedom, to the glorious freedom to become true sons of God, to which we are originally called and predisposed? There is one, but only the one, that Christ died for our sins and was raised for our righteousness (Rom. 4:25). Now if one died for all, they all died (2 Cor. 5:14, 15, 19). The delicious fruit of His holy death benefits all mankind sold under sin. He is the propitiation for our sins, not only for ours, but for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). Whoever in the obedience of faith considers himself crucified with Christ, whoever agrees with God that our old man is crucified together with him, cast off, disenfranchised, invalidated, killed, also confirms that whoever is crucified with Christ has also been raised with him to a new life of the spirit (Rom. 6:4, 5). He may say without hypocrisy: "I live, but now not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2, 20). Ten thousand times the life force of the Risen Lord has proven itself on the most lost and sunk sinners, ridding them of all shameful chains

of sin forever and guaranteeing them the ability to walk in righteous justice and holiness. And all this is supposed to be pious deception? Blessed deception, if there were any.

"Then also they that are fallen asleep in Christ are lost." For on what did they sleep in peace? On the confident assurance that their life was hidden with Christ in God, and that if now Christ would reveal our life, then they also would be revealed with him in his glory. (Col. 3:3, 4). In the joyful hope, as they bore the image of the earthly Adam in great weakness, dishonor, and corruption, so would they also bear in that day the image of the heavenly Adam, the Lord from heaven. But if Christ has not risen from the dead, if his body in the grave has become a prey of decay, then every thought of a revelation in glory is excluded, then no one will ever carry the image of the heavenly one, then our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the Lord have become the victims of a quite colossal deception, all their hope is lost, they are and always remain a prey of death and decay. For then a man is lost, if he must remain in death, and can never again come out of its realm. But this is impossible other than by raising the dead. It is to our great advantage if we let this clear example make clear to us what the apostle understood by being lost. In the parable of the prodigal son, the Master himself makes use of this very version of the term "lost," when he makes the twofold statement of the returned one: "This one, my son, was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found." In this we also notice what the Lord meant by "being found." If he now testifies of himself that the Son of man came to seek that which was lost, and that he seeks until he has found it, then he is rightly understood if we hold that he will neither rest nor repose until he has "found" out of it all that was and is in the power of death by raising the dead. Asked me yet another dear brother recently, "Yes, but, if someone will not let himself be found, is it also conceivable that a dead person will not let himself be raised?" Will the living Lord ask him at length? I think not. After all, for the Lord it is a matter of his undisputed, inviolable right of life to every soul that has come under the power of death in any form or manner. For he died for this purpose and came to life again, so that he might be lord over the dead and the living. And already a secular poet has rightly said: "Only the living has right." This applies in the highest sense to the prince of life, who has the keys of death and Hades.

Now we also understand the apostle's last conclusion in this context: "If we hope in Christ alone for this life, we are the most lamentable of all men." For what does earthly life mean to one who knows himself crucified to the world with Christ, who looks not to the visible but only to the invisible, who has learned through the grace that brings salvation to all men to deny his own ungodly nature and worldly lusts? Nothing but renunciation and denial, rejection of everything in which the children of this world seek and place their pleasure, their satisfaction, their happiness. But if we are saved from this present evil world according to the good pleasure of God's will, then we are saved only in the hope of the future glory, which will be revealed to us only after this life. If we are deceived in this hope, Paul says, then our lot is a miserable and wretched one. It is good and serves much to disillusion all such who are tempted to regain love for this present world and its nature, as Demas did, if we fully carry out this consequence with the apostle. It saves from all dangerous half-measures, and indecision in our attitude toward the world and its lust. To keep even roughly with it, means only enmity against God, inner unrestraint and indecision, and one shameful defeat after another. Therefore, let us cover our heads all the more cheerfully with the helmet of salvation and the hope of blessedness, which we wait for through patience and faith.

Verse 20-28: "But now Christ is risen from the dead as the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, resurrection also comes through a man. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: the firstfruits Christ; then those who belong to Christ at his return; then the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God and Father, when he will have abolished all rule, authority and power. For he must reign (as king) until he has put all enemies under his feet. As the last enemy, death will be abolished. For to him (his Christ) he (the Father)

has put all things under his feet. But when he says that all things are put under him, he is evidently excepted who put all things under him. But when all things shall be subjected unto him, then shall the Son himself also be subjected unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all(m)."

This is the heart of this glorious chapter. Here we are confronted with widths and lengths, depths and heights of divine thoughts of salvation– and glory, which transcend all human thinking. But also, if we allow them to carry their full weight and do not tamper with their simple, bright literal sense–, they mock all human attempts to restrict them and to lock them up in the bonds of some dogmatic system or scheme. In view of such certain promises, the heart of the redeemed child of God rejoices and exults in such a God and Father, and bathes his inner man in this ocean of inexhaustible, indomitable, triumphant fullness of love–and power, which the Father has given to the Son. The Son will make the most extensive use of this in the future eternities of eternities, according to the pleasure of the Father.

"But now Christ is risen from the dead as the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." Away with all doubts and misgivings, with all questioning and trepidation, with all pressure and anxious sorrow, with all fear and despondency. The great act of God stands there! Unshaken, immovable, not to be defeated! Life has beaten death out of the field forever. The final, complete triumph of life is assured all along the line. Nothing can ever question it, nothing can diminish or hinder it. The complete realization is only a question of time. Here faith stands on rocky ground. But here it is also allowed the boldest flight, the greatest task, to prove itself in the face of such tremendous promises of the true God. Here the apostle, through the Holy Spirit, draws conclusions that only true, humble, simple obedience of faith can meet.

How pale and sickly stands in contrast to all humanly proud, philosophical talk of "natural immortality", of a mere "survival after death"! What does such a philosophy know of this divine act ! It lacks any understanding for it. It has managed to put death as the actual redeemer in the place of the resurrected one. Only through death the immortal spirit of man becomes bare and free of all unworthy bonds of mortal corporeality. Hail to the great liberator Death! Thus is written on its pale, gray banner. A beautiful deliverer is that from which, according to the unmistakable testimony of Scripture, one must first be delivered again, which is the "last enemy," which shall and will be abolished and utterly done away with. Truly they have become fools with their wisdom. Disgrace and confusion on a theology that knows nothing better than to make a covenant with such philosophy, to choose it as the basis of its own systems. With a single grip, our apostle tears apart all this deceptive fabric of human sinews, which cut off the very lifeblood of the Gospel, which cut short and rob the Risen Lord of his honor, his eternal glory.

Is conscious survival after death "immortality"? Since when? Then conscious life in enmity against God is also immortality. For the mere act of my dying and departing from this world of visibility never and never makes me from an enemy of God to a child of peace, to an heir of the imperishable life and the divine glory. Since when does a miser die with his avarice, a lecher with his lust, a haughty man with his nameless pride and conceit? Do these vices decompose or burn when the corpse becomes a prey of the mold or the flames of the crematorium? Does death remove every trace of mean, low carnal disposition in the deceased? Does the mere death of the body dissolve every ignominious bondage of the human spirit to the lower instincts, every vestige of self-love, hatred, unforgiveness, and other enslavements? What is all this deceptive talk of liberation through the mere death of the body? We will come later, at verse 53 and 54 of this chapter, to speak further on the subject of immortality. Suffice it here that we counter all clever philosophizing of men with the simple, tremendous fact of divine demonstration of power: Christ is risen from the dead as the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. This is the divine confrontation with death and mortality, the divine solution of these deepest mysteries of human existence, the divine proclamation of final liberation from all fear and bondage to death. It does not leave to death even one inch wide creation territory. It knows no compromise no half-hearted

recognition of any redemptive meaning of death. It means death and ruin to the death in the whole universe in all eternities.

And now what does the addition have to tell us: "as the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep?" The correct answer is probably based on the Pauline evidence concerning the great divine law of the all-embracing raising of the dead as the foundation for the fact of the raising of Jesus from the dead, as we have heard: If there is no resurrection of the dead at all, then Christ has not risen either. But now Christ is risen as the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (Col. 1, 18). If this connection is indestructible - and we think it is - then there can be no honest doubt about the meaning of the word firstfruits. The word looks out not only to the limited multitude of those who have fallen asleep in faith, but to the whole human world, past, present and future, which has fallen into death. It would have been easy, if it was the intention of the apostle to draw the circle here more narrowly, to establish this with two small words. He would only have had to write: As the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep in him. Then every double meaning would be eliminated. This is also the case in verse 23, where the order and sequence to be observed at the resurrection is mentioned: Afterwards, those who belong to Christ at his return. The absence of any limiting addition certainly means that a limitation is not to be thought of here. This is made completely clear by the parallel drawn in verse 22: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive."

So irrefutably, Christ is the firstfruits of all those who have fallen asleep. But with the firstfruits the whole following harvest is set and guaranteed. In nature, on the soil of the old creation, between the bringing in of the firstfruits and that of the whole and full harvest, some disturbing and diminishing harmful influence may assert itself. This is of course excluded here. The firstfruits, by virtue of the power of their immortal life, guarantee the full and complete yield of the whole death-sowing of hope. There our beautiful word of the graves of the deceased, the word "God's Acre", gets an indescribably rich content.

The same thought is found in Col. 1, 18: "He who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might be first (have the preeminence or precedence). This is a distinction and honor that no one can or will dispute with him. That is why he is the duke, the commander of our salvation. His alone is the victory and the full triumph. All others only follow his shining, glorious footsteps.

The apostle's next argument illuminates this delicious truth even more brightly. He concludes, "For since by a man is death, by a man also cometh the resurrection of the dead." Here lies the almost compelling reason for the incarnation of the eternal Word, who was with God and was God, in the beginning. If raising the dead was to benefit all fallen humanity at all, then the Son of God had to be born into the flesh as a real, true human being, so that he could die. The deepest meaning of Jesus' human life lies in the fact that he could die for a whole world hopelessly doomed to death. Therefore all interpretation of the life of Jesus comes hopelessly too short, it fails completely, which wants to explain the life from another point of view. For through Jesus' blameless life itself, through the most sublime example he gave, through the most excellent teaching that flowed from his lips, the actual purpose of his existence on earth was never and never fulfilled. A humanity dead in sins and transgressions has never been helped out of its agony. The whole scripture testifies with only one voice: Christ had to die. And what he died, he died to sin once and for all. And the sting of death is sin. These are the indissoluble connections, as they were estimated with perfect wisdom in the divine council of love, and brought to full measure by his Father at the hands of the unrighteous and sinners, since they pinned him to the cursed wood; since his enemies concluded to have finally disposed of him; since the prince of this world thought to have achieved one of his most brilliant triumphs, and lo, he had only put himself and all his followers in the air and on earth in the pillory, his complete defeat irretrievably sealed for all eternity. This is what God did. That is the rich fruit of Christ's death. That the condition for the

triumph of imperishable life over death in any form or shape. This is the only way to understand Bethlehem in the light of Golgotha.

"Through one man." This may still be particularly emphasized and observed by us, because in it the law of the uniformity and the unity of the whole mankind confronts us with great clarity, as God Himself has put it into the structure, the construction of the human race, since He decreed, that from one blood of all men sexes should spring on the whole earth circle. As far as our knowledge reaches from the Scriptures, this law of the uniform descent of the whole human body from a single pair of parents, for example, does not apply in the angelic world. The scripture says nothing about angel fathers - angel mothers and their children or descendants. Therefore also the Epistle to the Hebrews says: "For he taketh not (the nature of) angels, but of the seed of Abraham." From the context of that passage (Heb. 2, 15) it is clear that there it is about exactly the same thought as here, the solidary unity and unity of the Lord with the "children", who were just partakers of flesh and blood, which is why he also had to become partaker of the same, in order to be able to take as the "one man" the whole mankind with him into the fellowship of his death and then also of his bodily resurrection. This togetherness, which is only possible through such a unified descent, has thus become the means, the effective lever, in the divine Creator's wisdom, of the general human ruin of sin, from which no one can exclude himself who was born of woman, but also the equally comprehensive antidote, of the blood shed by the "one man" for the reconciliation of the whole world. The following verse emphasizes this even more clearly.

"For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." There we have one of the apostle's boldest inferences drawn from biblical facts. It is so bold, so overwhelming in its simple execution, that it is not at all to be wondered at if our sluggish and stubbornly unbelieving mind resists it and picks out all conceivable hooks and hooks and hooks on which it can hang its numerous ifs and buts, just so that it will not have to let that apply so nakedly and unrestrictedly. But everything does not help there. The word stands firm and cannot be shaken. Whoever wants to deny it honestly and say, I just don't believe it, well, he just has to know what he is doing. But the word they shall let stand and have no thanks. Nowhere is there a nook, however modest, behind which a doubt could hide. Only he who would be able to furnish proof that in Adam all men became a justified prey of death, because they all became sinners with our first father Adam, might raise his voice with a commanding, "Stop, that is not true!" But to whom the testimony of the Scriptures to the universal fallenness of all mankind to death is certain, there is no escape from the apostolic declaration: So also in Christ all will be made alive.

Because this is now so, and one cannot avoid to admit this, other means are tried to evade the full weight of these powerful words. Yes, they say, certainly all people will be awakened one day, but the ungodly will be given only a special body suitable for suffering endless torment in hell by this resurrection. Thus one believes to have invalidated the apostolic testimony to the effect that it does not teach that all people will finally partake of eternal life. It will be worthwhile to take a closer look at this peculiar procedure with the word of the apostle.

For what does one do? First of all, one performs an act with the Scriptures which is not justified by anything in the context of this passage or the rest of the revelation; one divides this testimony and lets it have its blessed, delicious meaning only for one, and that is the smallest part of the Adamic mankind. One silently excludes from it the largest part, the mankind dying in unbelief, one limits it quite arbitrarily only to the people who have become believers in Christ. With what right? Without any right of sober, biblical interpretation. Of course, one cannot deny or limit the first part of it without hopelessly contradicting the overwhelming testimony of Scripture. Thereby, in the small postscript, in the Pauline conclusion, therefore, in Christ all will be made alive, one insinuates a double meaning to this word make alive, but only in thought. For the believers, these words should and must mean that they will be made alive in Christ to eternal blessedness and glory. But for all the rest of mankind who have died, these same words mean the direct opposite. They are qualified by resurrection only to endless torture.

One performs such tricks with a very simple, transparently clear and quite easily graspable word of God, just in order not to have to give up the idea, the dogmatic spectre of endless, purposeless and aimless damnation in hell. Is it worth it? With what tenacity one clings to concepts and ideas, which were once decreed by a sole ruling theology and recognized and stamped as solely valid. And then those who nevertheless dare to let such a clear testimony of Scripture stand and be valid according to its simple literal sense are "false teachers dangerous to the soul" who must be put under the ban!

A very simple, theologically unspoiled person will never think, when he reads such words for the first time, that Paul here in a single, short sentence, wanted to or could have given one and the same word a completely opposite meaning. Only theologians who are philosophically educated can manage such a thing.

In addition to this, the apostle uses an expression in Greek that is repeatedly used in Scripture for the glorious resurrection of Christ Himself. It is not the usual "egeirein", which also means a mere revival to the natural, psychic existence; but it is "zoopoiein", so actually the significant word for the bringing forth of the new divine, imperishable life (zoä) from death. The parallel with Adam demands that the agreement is complete on both sides: as certainly as all men have become partakers of the Adamic death being, just as certainly all men shall become partakers of the imperishable life in the second and last Adam, Christ. If this word does not mean to say this, it would be the first time in Scripture that the Holy Spirit had not found the right expression for it. For if one were to give a linguist the special task of expressing this thought precisely in short, unambiguous words, he could not possibly find a better, more appropriate version for it than the Holy Spirit gives the apostle here in the pen. So we remain confidently and gratefully with this unbreakable word and do not allow ourselves to put something under it that is not inherent in it from afar.

With this the apostle has now first of all only drawn the great basic lines which God has determined in Christ for the final deliverance of all people from all Adamic death being. The next word instructs us about the procedure determined by God Himself for this, the order followed and to be followed by Himself. For our God is a God of order. He does not think of finishing his great works at one stroke, but has expressly created for this purpose the "ages" (eons) in which the Son will have to carry out all these orders of the Father for his and the Father's glorification.

"But every man in his own order." So first of all determined: Every one. Not a single deceased human child will be forgotten or overlooked. Nor will anyone be able to escape it. For the Father has subjected everything to the Son and has left nothing that is not subject to Him (Heb. 2:8). And another scripture testifies that Christ died and came back to life for this purpose, that he is Lord over the dead and the living, and therefore has the unlimited right of disposal and determination (Rom. 14, 9). And again, the Son already knows on earth that the Father has given Him authority over all flesh - that is, also over the dead - so that He may give eternal life to all whom the Father has given Him (John 17:2). Is it also conceivable that the Son, fully aware of such unlimited power, should not make the most extended use of such authority? Would we not, if it were given to us? Certainly we would. How much more he who said: But this is the will of the Father who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but that I should raise it up at the last day (John 6:39).

The word translated here as order (tagma) is a military term. We could put for it division, company, battalion, unit. So we see clearly how with the same the idea of a well structured and exactly observed order and sequence is inseparably connected. The world war has brought before our eyes, and before the eyes of all the peoples of the earth, a most vivid picture of what we are dealing with here. When the declarations of war were made, mobilizations took place on all sides, which had been expected and prepared for a long time. But in each individual case there was only one mobilization order, which was binding for the entire army affected by it in all its parts for all existing and still growing cohorts. Nowhere, however, did all the millions who had been at war for more than three years go into the field

at once, but only "each in his troop, his year", according to his military readiness and equipment. There were also first-rate troops, i.e. units which were in such a state of readiness that they could face the enemy in less than 24 hours. The others, no less faithful, loyal, and brave, followed, and will continue to do so as long as they are needed. But each in his own order. So the word is valid here. It should effectively clear up completely unbiblical ideas, as they have come among the Christian people for centuries through a backward theology, which has cared little about the great things of the future, and have taken possession of Christian thinking, especially the idea of a resurrection at the same time encompassing all mankind of all those who have died, who then have to appear in a single, great, dramatic act of judgment before the judgment throne of Christ and there are to be divided into two groups for eternity. Towards one side the blessed for heaven, towards the other the lost down into the eternal torment of hell. Christian art, too, has lent itself almost exclusively to fixing such naive and immature ideas in the minds. And Christian song poetry has unfortunately gone the same wrong way. It takes some time for a simple-minded scriptural scholar to completely detach himself from such unjustified, unfounded views, which one has imbibed, as it were, with his mother's milk. This is also a mental bondage from which only the word of truth can release us and keep us free, but not without severe inner struggles. But it is worth the effort to fight through it to complete liberation and inner clarity.

Here the word of the divine order in matters of the resurrection must first come to its full right with us, otherwise we remain constantly the victim of hopeless ambiguity and confusion. And what is the order determined by God Himself?

"The firstborn Christ". So it is fitting, according to Col. 1, 18: "He who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might have the preeminence (precedence), or be first." Significant, however, and worthy of our careful attention, is the fact that He is not outside or above the whole divine order, but is the very beginning of that well-ordered order, which has its continuance and guaranteed execution in Him. He belongs organically, life-effectively to it. The man Jesus Christ, now transferred into the incorruptible, is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of this marvelous divine structuring and grouping of a whole humanity bringing from death to life. The whole dowry of divine nature, which belongs to him, he brings with him and makes it liquid and available for this whole mankind, which died with him and is to be raised with him. For we hold that if one died for all, they all died (2 Cor. 5:14), as Paul boldly concludes once again. And because it was the good pleasure that in him, who was born of woman, all the fullness of the Godhead should dwell, therefore to him, the firstfruits, all the rest is fundamentally secured. For all the fullness of the Godhead is in him and with him for the final success of this all-encompassing purpose of the eons, to bring everything in him under one head (Eph. 1, 10; -3,11). So that now there is no obstacle at all for the fulfillment of the scripture that promises: "To know the love of Christ, which surpasses all knowledge, that you may be filled until you are completely filled with God (Eph. 3, 19)" And that other: "That God may be all in all (1 Cor. 15, 28)".

"Afterwards, those who belong to Christ at His Second Coming." Around him, the starting point– and at the same time the center of the whole great divine body, of the new human body, which is to be snatched from death forever, only in concentric and ever-widening circles area after area sets itself, as they are to be effectively seized and permeated in orderly succession by the forces of imperishable life, through resurrection. The first important group includes all those who belong to the Christ of God as a member at his return from heaven, where he has withdrawn for the duration of the whole present course of time. The present course of time serves primarily for the gathering and preparation of those who, through the Holy Spirit and the gospel of the Son of God, are brought into living fellowship and unity with the Son of God, and are thus raised to become true sons of God with equal and full rights, and are transformed into the image of their firstborn brother. Therefore we take no offense at taking

the word "who belong to the Christ" in this narrower, special sense. For it is inadmissible to give it a broader meaning, since, for example, there can be no question of the chosen people of the old covenant, Israel, being brought to the new life of the spirit, let alone to the glorious resurrection in the image of Christ, even though they belong to him in a very definite sense and will belong to him for all eternity. Nor is it possible to think here of the much wider circle of nations, which also prophetically belong to him, since it is written: "Ask of me, and I will give the nations for an inheritance, and the ends of the world for a possession (Ps. 2:8). There is no biblical reason at all to draw the circle of those who belong to Christ wider at this important point than the Holy Spirit has understood and established his task and activity for this course of time. In spite of all the tremendous efforts ever made by overzealous Christians to draw these lines wider and to put, for example, world conversion, social reform, a new order of nations–and states, lasting world peace and more on the program of the Holy Spirit, one has not been able to obtain His cooperation and confirmation for this. All such attempts, anticipating God's plans, are doomed to final fiasco. Our God will not stand for that. Today's Christianity will have to endure bitter and very painful trials. Just as thoroughly as, for example, the delusion of already existing Christian nations and governments has gone bankrupt, so thoroughly will other favorite dreams of leading spirits in church and state come to nothing.

Bright light falls on our version of this word also from Col. 1, 18, where we meet the church, his body, in the actual center of the great plan of work, as it is laid down there for him, through whom and for whom now also everything is created that is created, and in whom everything exists, and through whom now also everything created in heaven and on earth has been reconciled to himself and is brought to peace. There he, the beginning and firstborn, stands in the center, as we were allowed to explain above. But directly attached and associated to him stands the church belonging to him, called and ordained to the same work and the same glory, only that he has the precedence, according to due.

Here another question arises, which is answered differently by different dear servants of God, that of a continued resurrection of chosen saints of all centuries since the resurrection of Jesus. We do not want to attach too much weight to this question. The Word before us gives no reason to do so. Rather, it would seem that in any case, even if one admits the possibility or the real occurrence of such revivals, they are to be regarded as such rare exceptions that they do not in any way disturb or interfere with the general statement "afterwards those who belong to Christ at His return". For the majority of the congregation, the rule laid down here applies undisputedly: resurrection only at his return, not before.

Another question is whether and in how far the word of the "first resurrection" Rev.20,5,6 belongs here. According to our understanding of the completely Israelite character of the book of Revelation to John, that word actually does not belong into this context. For our understanding, the whole Revelation of Patmos is not at all about the church from the nations, as it forms the actual content of the Pauline "mystery". (See about this my remarks: The Last Book of the Bible, in No. 1 of this volume, of January 1918) For a justification of this view this is not the place. It seems clear to us that the seer on Patmos coined the expression in accordance with the prophecy by the prophet Isaiah ch. 26, if one compares verse 14 with verse 19 of the same chapter. There it is clearly spoken of a resurrection of "your dead", in contrast to those who are not resurrected, and that definitely on Israelite soil, as also the prophet Isaiah did not see a trace of the Pauline mystery of a body of Christ from the nations, as little as any prophet of Israel of former times (see also Ezk. 37, 11 - 14).

At the most, the word in the Revelation could be connected with the one before us in such a way that it could be understood in the sense of a concluding remark, after which it would get the meaning: Thus ends the first resurrection, wherein would be included the resurrection here mentioned of the actual church, the body of Christ, from all the nations of the earth. In another sense we cannot use that word of John in the Apocalypse. But even such a version would only offer new difficulties, in that different kinds of resurrections would thereby have to be brought under one heading. This would not be in

accordance with the accuracy and care in the biblical designations and groupings that can be perceived everywhere else.

It makes much more sense to us to understand the resurrection of those who belong to Christ at his return as simply a continuation or completion of his resurrection. If he is the head of his body, the church, then the resurrection of all the members of his body, which is in question here, is essentially nothing else than his own resurrection to the full divine greatness, to the measure of his full growth according to divine plan, according to words like 1 Cor. 12, 12; Eph. 4, 13, 16. According to this, the Christ of God in the full sense is only a great organic unity, in which head and members can certainly be distinguished, but not essentially separated from each other and especially grouped. Such a grouping based on organic unity is definitely biblical. It would also do justice to the temporal succession emphasized here, or the temporal distance between the resurrection of Jesus, which happened almost 19 centuries ago, and the resurrection (or transformation) of all the members of his body, which is still to come. If one really wants to be completely and fully serious about the wonderful unique unity of the Christ of God according to head and members, then basically nothing speaks against such a view. - Yes, with such a conception just the moment of the temporal distance, as it undeniably exists, only gets more weight and importance. And this is again extremely important for the correct understanding of the following orders. One recognizes only then so rightly, with which large factors at time periods our God counts in his whole all-embracing plan. One learns to be less impatient in the face of the seemingly long delays that are planned in the execution of the tremendous tasks that the Father has set for the Son. One learns the rare, high, divine art of faithful waiting in patience. One sees how masterfully our God knows how to handle the ages (eons) that He created for the Son, as through the Son (Heb. 1, 1, 2).

"After that, the end." A short, concise but very significant word. It brings up the important question: What end? For in Scripture, Old Testament and New Testament alike, there is repeated mention of "ends," which by no means always mean the same thing. In this particular case, we are in the fortunate position of being able to determine with certainty from the next context which "end" is to be thought of here. This is made possible for us by the accompanying words: "When he hands over (back) the kingdom to the God and Father, when he will have done away with all rule, authority and power." That this is not yet the "end of all things" is clear from the more distant context, according to which other great acts of the Son are reported as following this "end," all of which must precede the actual final goal and "end," since God will be all and in all. Thus, the "end" here first stated, according to the explanatory words of the 24th verse, means the conclusion, not the beginning, of the actual kingdom of Jesus Christ in all its ramifications and divisions, heavenly and earthly. This Kingdom of the Anointed One is the real subject of all the revelation of God given so far. It comprehends in itself not only the execution of all God's thoughts with the church of Jesus Christ, but the fulfillment of all that God has spoken of by the mouth of all his holy prophets from the beginning, whether for Israel, whether for the nations of the earth, whether for all the waiting creature, whether for the invisible principalities, thrones, and dominions in the heavenly regions of the air. "For God has given to His beloved Son the name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11; Acts 3:21).

But if this word of the "end" takes such a wide and comprehensive outlook, then it is inappropriate if one wants to accommodate the still remaining teachings of the Risen One for the elimination of the death being from the whole creation of God in a short period of about 1000 years. We believe to remain quite sober and within the framework of the Scriptures, if we assume that up to the "end" taken into prospect here a long series of eons will run off, in which one after the other of all the great things of God, of which the Scriptures have spoken in word and shadow image, will come to the completed

representation. And in doing so, we have not even taken into account the possibility that our God may still have "surprises" for us in the future, of which he has not yet said anything, just as little as he let something be known in previous ages about the wonderful mystery of a congregation from all nations for "the body" of the Son of his love. Our God does not care about a few eternities more or less. His means allow him to deal with it abundantly. He is the God of eternities. All serve the glorification of his glorious Son. There God is not meager in the use of his means. For the illumination and substantiation of what is said here, the mere reference to words like Eph. 3, 21 "To Him be the glory in the church in Christ Jesus to all generations of the age of ages! Amen!" These are not only linguistic arts for the sake of effect, but there is clearly reckoned with an "age of ages", i.e. with a now still incalculable series of ages. The same is found in Eph. 2:7: "That in the ages yet to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace by his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Both words are found precisely in the epistle, which deals in an outstanding way with the unspeakably high purposes of God with the church of Jesus Christ, which is called the fullness of Him who fills all in all. The Holy Spirit does not make use of such mighty means of speech without well-founded cause.

Also the words of that "end" lying before us contain some clues, by which we can form ourselves approximately a yardstick, not for the mathematically exact calculation of this "end", but for the approximate estimation of the enormous extension of the time courses, with which here is counted. We see quite clearly before us that between the resurrection of the glorious head, Christ, and that of his entire body, an eon extends, the duration of which now already reaches two millennia. And even if we may assume with a certain justification that this very aeon will soon approach its conclusion, it is nevertheless not possible for us to set exact limits to it. It is also not necessary. Its dimensions are already great enough to let us recognize that God has by no means dealt scarcely and sparingly with the centuries, in which it has been a matter of shaping the body of his Christ and leading it towards its final completion. It is obvious, however, that this is only a preliminary work for the full growth of the Christ of God himself, head and members, who will be able to approach in an effective way the solution of the tasks which are waiting for him, including heaven and earth, human beings and the world of angels, only after he has attained full greatness. For with an unenlightened, not yet immortalized, imperfect, only piecemeal recognizing congregation, the Lord cannot possibly fulfill the whole of Scripture, as it is his duty with regard to his future. That is why his church, his "fullness", his completion, means the full measure of his divine greatness. Thus we have before us first the pre-Christian eons, which had to precede his first appearance in the flesh. Then soon 2000 years of preparation only first of his own body, i.e. of the organs, which are indispensable and essential for the appropriate solution and fulfillment of his large messianic, world-ruling and universal tasks in the area of the whole creation of God.

Now it is a quite popular idea which is not only believed with pleasure in many believing circles but has also got a certain dogmatic meaning that the 6000 years of unrest and toil on earth will be followed by the great world Sabbath, the seventh millennium, in which the aims of God are to be reached with his creation just as it happened with the same at that time in the 7 days of the creation. This looks quite biblical, but it is not at all. The only thing that could be said from this line would be that just as those seven days were sufficient to introduce the head of the old creation into his sovereign territory, so the now soon past 6 millennia would be sufficient to prepare the head of the new creation for the effective exercise of his royal dignity and rule. This could be justified to some extent. But the actual execution of what is incumbent on the Christ of God as the second Adam to do could only then be tackled. If, therefore, the significance of the seventh Sabbatical millennium is to be spoken of in a serious way, then it can only be done under the express caution that with it the goal and the limits can by no means be set for the fulfillment of all that God has spoken of through the mouth of his holy prophets from time immemorial. For this eternities of ages must come. There no 1000 years are enough, that must be quite clear to every thinking researcher of the scripture.

"When he will hand over the kingdom to the God and Father." A somewhat closer consideration of the major events mentioned here, which signal the "end" in question, will make it even clearer to us what tremendous periods of time are involved in this 3rd major period, which is called for the fulfillment of the great main task of the returning Lord, concerning the abolition of all death power, in God's creation. The kingdom meant here can be none other than the messianic and theocratic one held out in certain prospect by all the prophets, with Jerusalem restored, converted, and inhabited by Jehovah Himself to glory as its capital and world center (Isa. 2; Micah 4; Isa. 60 1,ff). We must here refrain from entering into the more detailed determination of its probable duration, but note that we are deeply convinced that the same will by no means be confined to a thousand years only. We agree with the explanations of a thorough researcher of prophecy, Trench, who in a very readable writing, which is also available in German translation under the title "AFTER THE THOUSAND YEARS" [1], gives the proof that the thousand years will probably only mean the fulfillment of the Davidic war time, which was devoted to the subjugation of his many enemies, while the real kingdom of peace and justice from earth, shadowed by the regiment of Solomon, will still follow the same. Moreover, the attentive researcher of the prophecy will soon be able to recognize that in it so many and so great blessings and privileges are promised to the pardoned Israel, also in its future relations with the surrounding world of nations, that one simply cannot accommodate the historical realization of them in the narrow framework of only 1000 literal years. This has also caused a number of serious, believing Bible researchers not to take the number thousand in the literal sense. They saw in it the indication of a very extended, rounded off period of time which would possibly extend over several eons. Whereby it can remain open after all that God also keeps the exact time of 1000 years as such punctually. As he also did in his time with the 70 years which were determined over Jerusalem to the judgment, which marked however by no means the outermost border of the terrible punishment judgment which affected Israel. Nevertheless, they were observed quite precisely and punctually in their sequence, by the return from the Babylonian captivity. While the times ordained by God are and remain unquestionably reliable, in this the great God has reserved for Himself a marvelous freedom of movement. And it is to be assumed that God holds it in matters of the judgment thus, as he did it obviously with Israel, and will hold it not differently, if it concerns evidences of his salvation-bringing and restoring grace. After all, God Himself makes the measure of His judicial visitations upon His people the standard of what He will do in the way of great grace to that same people. "And it shall come to pass, as ye have been a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and as ye have been a curse among the house of Israel, so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing (Zech. 8:13; Isa. 19:23-25). And Isaiah says: "In overflowing anger I have hidden my face from you, but with everlasting mercy I will have mercy on you, says the Lord."(Is. 54, 8). Millennia of his overflowing wrath Jehovah calls a "moment"; and there should only a thousand years suffice to denote the full measure of the full "everlasting mercy" he will exercise? That would be a crying disproportion to the one who said: "Where sin has become mighty, grace has become even more overflowing" (Rom. 5:20).

However, we do not only have such probability calculations at hand, but the Scriptures are quite clear about the duration of the kingdom on earth promised to the Messiah of Israel. It says of the same that it will not only never be destroyed, like all the kingdoms of the nations that preceded it, but it shall remain forever (Dan. 2:44; -7:18, 27). The same is confirmed to the virgin mother of the Lord by the angel: "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign as king over the house of Jacob forever (Luk. 1, 32, 33; Ps. 145, 13). As clearly as the Word before us teaches a future cessation of this kingdom, it is certain that its duration on earth will last for ages. This is completely sufficient for the view we advocate here, according to which the measure of its duration is by no means to be limited, let us say to a single millennium.

[1] Unfortunately, this typeface is no longer available today (Feb. 2000)

If we now pay attention to the more detailed provisions about what Jesus as King of the Messianic Kingdom has to accomplish on earth during His reign, then it will become much clearer to us what we have stated so far, about the necessity of unmeasured periods of time or eons:

"When he shall have done away with all rule, authority and power. For he must reign (as king) until he has put all enemies to the footstool of his feet." This is a program of quite immeasurable scope. These are tasks of a scope and magnitude which it is not even possible for us to encompass today. There is only one thing we can understand well, and that is that they are in proportion to the divine preparations made for the solution of these tasks. These, however, as we were allowed to explain above, have taken a series of millennia since the beginning of the creation of man, not to mention the eons which will have preceded, yes, must have preceded the creation of man on earth.

One might well be tempted to say that it would take such an enormous amount of time to put an end to the existing rulers and powers and authorities, that it could all be done in a relatively short time. But looking back at the past, which gives us a certain standard for God's rule in the future, we will have to tell ourselves that the divine patience and long-suffering will not be less towards his rebellious creatures in the times to come than it was in the past. Because Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and in all eternities (eons). Especially since the abolition of all and every violence, power and dominion cannot and will not be about anything less than its complete moral overcoming, and not only a violent shattering (e.g. Is. 45. 23-25!!). The latter will be (according to Dan. 2 and Zech. 2, 1-4) an essential moment in the final realization of the Messianic reign on earth. But it is not only about earthly powers and dominions that can be dealt with by purely external destruction, as this is not the case in the purely spiritual realm. There it will undoubtedly be a question of the release and use of a hitherto unavailable abundance of moral life forces. To this the fact allows us a conclusion that the Father has determined for the Son especially for this purpose a whole indescribable "fullness" of sons of God transformed into his own image at the disposal, who only make up the measure of his full growth, the congregation of believers. For so much is quite clear from the unanimous presentation of all the prophetic testimonies of the New Testament, that in the eternal purpose of God the completed church is intended as the organ, or the totality of the organic units, of which the glorified Son shall and will avail Himself on His great day, in order to carry out all the Father's will of love with all His creation.

The scope of this task of the Son becomes even clearer to us when we consider that all sovereignty, power and authority are only caused and induced by sin and apostasy from God, the sole ruler of heaven and earth. In a community of any kind, where every single member is completely and totally inspired and governed by the spirit of God, no reason could be found for authority or rule. For where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. Not the freedom of the flesh and of self-will, of arbitrariness and rebellion, but the glorious freedom of true sons of God, who inevitably, without any compulsion, out of full impulse of love, find their highest bliss in doing the holy and perfect will of their God and Father in all things. Therefore, the true church of Christ, which comes from His Spirit and shares His mind, is not under law, rule, regulation or statute of any kind, but under grace alone. Thus it is understood that it has its head in Christ, i.e. is determined by him alone, the life-giving Spirit, in all its vital functions. It has no need of rulers or other external powers, of spiritual princes or authorities or lords. The apostle himself refuses to be considered or treated as a lord (2.Cor. 1, 24; 1.Pet. 5, 2, 3).

Some remarkable statements of the Scriptures about the present and future fate of the fallen angels also throw bright light on this point. Peter writes in his second epistle ch 2:4: "That God spared not the angels which sinned, but cast them into Tartarus, pits of darkness, as such as are kept for judgment." And in a very similar way, the apostle Jude in his epistle (v6) speaks of the angels who did not preserve their dominion but left their own habitation, that God had kept them under darkness with chains of Hades for the judgment of the great day. Two things are clear from this double testimony. First, that the present state of darkness in which the fallen angelic world finds itself is not the final state for them,

but only a preservation for later judgment on that "great day." Just as the Lord also speaks quite clearly of the fire that has been prepared for the devil and his angels, but into which they will only be thrown after the expiration of the 1000 years and the subsequent short period of their release from the abyss (Rev. 20:7, 10). On the other hand, it can be seen quite clearly that the present state of darkness of the satanic kingdom obviously reaches back over several eons, far behind the creation of man as the owner and ruler of the dwelling place abandoned by Satan and his comrades, this earth. The scripture teaches just as unambiguously that the whole course of this world until now was subordinated to these powers of darkness as a righteous judgment on the world, which obeyed Satan more until this day than the living and true God, so that the latter can be called the God and prince of this world (Eph. 2, 2; -6, 12; Gal. 1, 4; 2. Cor. 4, 4; Col. 1, 13). [2]

We are thus confronted with the very significant fact that the whole course of the world history up to now since the fall of man has in reality given the scene and the opportunity for the for the time being not yet final judgment of the fallen angelic world, whose fall will undoubtedly have preceded the Adamic fall on this earth by unmeasured eons. So God obviously executed that preliminary judgment on the satanic spirit world already before the creation of man, by which he put it into custody with chains of darkness and Hades for the still future "great day of judgment". Without going into all the details of this wonderful interrelationship between the history of mankind and the fate of angels, for which there is no room here, it is clear that God in his judgment of the "sons of God" who first fell away from him dealt with incomprehensible long-suffering and patience. This is a procedure that probably gives us a clue for the view that also in the further course of his expected judgments a substantial acceleration of the same is hardly to be expected. The eons are after all his. And if it was the good pleasure, as we read, that in Christ all fullness should dwell, and that all things in heaven and on earth should be reconciled to Himself and brought to peace through Him (Col. 1, 20), then we may be of good confidence that the filling of the eons created for the Son will correspond in a perfect way to the magnificent goal which the Father has set for Him.

According to Eph. 1, 10 it is the declared goal of God to bring all things in Christ under one head, which are in heaven and on earth. How this is meant can be seen in Col. 1, 20, according to which all things are to be reconciled through Him and to Him and brought to peace through Himself, through His blood. The congregation of all peoples of the earth is the model for this, insofar as it is lifted out of all authority and made free, standing alone in and under him, its heavenly head. In it is first realized what is meant by this universal headship of the Christ of God. It will only be extended in the future ages, from aeon to aeon, more and more to all areas of the whole, vast creation of God, until all his enemies are made the footstool of his feet, until in heaven and on earth every resistance, every inner enmity is completely overcome, every remote necessity of force and domination is eliminated. Only then is Christ the true head of the whole created universe, when all creatures have not only been subjected outwardly, but have become inwardly "incorporated," essential organs of his own fullness of life - and of God. We will see this with even greater clarity and definiteness when we come to verse 28 of this section.

Here we first note that the guiding thought for the present apostolic exposition is that death, in whatever form, is completely overcome. That is why the word follows here: "as the last enemy, death is dismissed". It is almost inconceivable how one has got stuck in the thought that this explanation does not mean at all what it says. For in the whole prevailing view of the final destiny of most people, it is taken for granted that the last enemy that remains, to which the whole, vast remnant of godless and stubbornly unbelieving people, including Satan and his angels, will be delivered, is the other death. One simply does not want to accept that Jesus is also the unrestricted lord and master of the second death. In view of the concise statements given here and in many other places that the Father has given him all

[2] Note Feb. 2000: The reference to the first creation is probably meant, which became desolate and empty by a cosmic judgment. The present earth was destined to be ruled by Adam! Genesis 1, 26, ff!

authority in heaven and on earth, that everything without exception has been put under his feet (without him who has subordinated everything to him), one insists that there is no salvation at all from the authority of the second death. The least that should and might be expected from the apostle here, if this were so, would be a definite qualification, such as he clearly gives in verse 27, where he knows how to mention only the Father as the only exception to general subjection to the Son. Is it conceivable that the Holy Spirit should have resisted the apostle's expressly naming even the second death here, on this occasion of such importance, which is necessarily of no less consequence to all mankind than the realization that the Father alone is not subject to the Son? Simple honesty can only deny this.

A simple reader of the Scriptures without any dogmatic bias would never get any other thought from this word than that, of course, the other death is also to be abolished and completely eliminated. Hidden to the wise and prudent, revealed to the underage. Nevertheless, it will have to remain that also the second death is nothing else than a form of death, even if it is the most severe and terrible one. But notice that the scripture does not know how to name it differently, but as "death". And of this it is said without contradiction that he is the last enemy to be put to death. But he will be put to death, that is God's definite promise. And that this being done away with cannot happen in any other way than by showing the inexhaustible life and resurrection powers of the whole, full Christ, does not even need to be emphasized in this chapter. It goes without saying. It would make no sense at all to speak of death as the last enemy to be annihilated, especially in this discussion about raising the dead, if this did not signal the last, complete, residual triumph of the Prince of Life. Every attempt to let the second death remain as unconquerable and uneliminated, makes a breach in the whole argument of the apostle, which could not be filled by anything, if it had to remain standing.

But if this single word reaches far, far beyond the power of the other death, then we recognize how correct it must be to assume an unmeasured series of glorious eons for the final execution of such a great life program, against which assumption there is not only no obstacle at all in the Scriptures, but which is rather presupposed by them as inevitable.

We have pointed out in other places that, according to our view, the apostle's perspective of the church in this 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians is an immensely wider one than that of the last chapter of the revelation of Jesus Christ, which became to John, at his future. There lies probably one of the greatest difficulties for many Scripture researchers and readers, who have become accustomed to assume, as one has usually been taught, that the perspective of the last chapters of the Apocalypse is the very widest that the Word of God contains and opens up to us at all. It is not the place here to explain this question in detail. However, we will be confronted with it quite clearly when we come to the last word of this section in verse 28. There we will also have to come back to this. First of all, we ask the patient readers to consider this question carefully, and to bear in mind that, if this is so, it goes without saying that the church, which is in Christ, should be given the fullest information by its apostle about the very last and furthest goals with it and its glorious head in relation to the whole universe, which is to be united in it under one head. It is due to her by virtue of her heavenly calling in him, the head over the all. Once this has been recognized, the greatest difficulties that stand in the way of such a conception as we hold here fall away. It becomes clear once again what was robbed from the church when it was taught to limit itself only to the personal assurance of salvation and the full salvation of its own soul, and thereby to regard itself only as the "New Testament Israel." Within the framework of such narrowly drawn lines, it is of course impossible to gain the broad view that is necessary to do some justice to the great thoughts of God in Christ.

"For unto him hath he put all things under his feet." With these words, Christ is identified and confirmed as the second Adam. The first Adam, however, who did not pass the test, had been told to rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, over the cattle of the whole earth, and over everything that creeps on the earth (Gen. 1:26). Of this unlimited right of rulership, the still blameless man, made the

first exemplary use when he gave his name to every living creature on earth, and God confirmed in it his professed rulership (Gen. 2, 19, 20). For what I can correctly recognize and name, that I rule. The 8th Psalm then brings an extension and the transfer of this ruling power and dignity to the Son of Man, who was for a time humbled among the angels, but was crowned with honor and adornment and exalted above all the heavens (Heb. 1, 1 –3; –2, 5 –9; Phil. 2, 9 –11).

From the just mentioned New Testament words it is evident that in the determination of the ruler's area for the first man only typical –prophetic lines were drawn, which were extended for the proven second Adam as the son of man of divine destiny into the unmeasured and unlimited. As it is clearly said here that God has put everything under the feet of his Christ. The apostle also clearly testifies to this when he writes to the Ephesians: "...and set him on his right hand in the heavens, high above every principality, power, might, dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come; and having put all things under his feet, he gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:20-22).–

The figurative expression "put under the feet" is indicative of the complete subjugation, unrestricted ruler –and right of disposal over the entire visible and invisible creation. In it the final solution and liberation from all and every other imprisonment and domination, lie, delusion, selfishness, death and ruin is guaranteed.

"But when he says that all things are subject to him, he is evidently excepted who has subjected all things to him." One might be tempted to say that this is actually self-evident, that it is an incomprehensible thought that the Father, who subjects his whole creation to the unlimited rule of the Son, should also subject himself to it. But the more such a conclusion must appear to us factually justified, the more significant becomes the circumstance that nevertheless it is clearly stated that there is only this sole exception to the unlimited sovereignty of the Son. This settles, even if only in a negative form, any idea as if any hostile, disturbing, corrupting power or personality as such would ever be able to escape the unlimited sovereignty, the exclusive right of disposal –and determination of the Son. This also testifies in simple speech Heb. 2, 8: "But in subjecting all things to Him, He left nothing out but not subject (Weizsäcker)." It may be readily conceded that this unconditional submission to the Son, extended to all creatures without exception, does not in and of itself mean voluntarily rendered obedience of love. But it is already a great step forward once we have fully realized that every idea of the endless continuation of an authority of darkness pervading creation, never rendered harmless, persisting in unbowed defiance and deadly enmity, has been completely withdrawn from the ground. And this happens in a simple, irrefutable way through this word alone.

That that other bold word of the apostle, "But where sin abounded, grace abounded still more,"– does not turn back even before the limits of the deepest depths of hell, other words of our God sufficiently testify to us. [3]

"But when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son himself also be subdued unto him that subdued all things unto him, that God may be all in all(m)."

A deep, not easy to grasp word, whose conclusion, however, cannot be surpassed in exuberant glory. Whoever can completely believe in his God and Father without doubting ifs and buts, all scales fall from his eyes and all anxious, tormenting fetters from his heart and mind. That is redeeming, liberating knowledge of the salvation of God.

We think here of Heb. 2:8: "Now we see not yet all things subdued unto him,"– a word that eighteen centuries after it was written has not yet lost any of its validity. The popular idea and assumption that the Church of Christ represents the Kingdom of God and that it has the task of "conquering the world for Jesus" is just a pious delusion that has already become fatal enough for the Church and the world.

[3] See, e.g., Isa45:22–25; –46:9, 10; etc.

And one does not let go of it yet. Only recently I read in an official organ of one of the leading large American free churches the following: "The sum of our sufferings and sacrifices (in this war,) –the blood of our sons and the nameless anguish of our hearts –is only a sign of retaliation for the one supreme (transcendent) sacrifice on the cross. Christ died to save the world for us; and now we die to save the world for Him." This shook me to the depths of my soul. After all, Scripture knows nothing of the Father putting anything under the feet of His Son's still fallible, unfinished, mortal and sinful church, let alone doing so to the unspeakable mishmash that calls itself "Christendom."

How long it will take to reach the goal set here can neither be seen nor determined. We have spoken above at V24 in detail about this point. The present words also aim at the very "end" which is spoken of there, this fixed target point for the victoriously progressing reign of the royal Son. We need not, therefore, dwell on the various divisions of the all-embracing process of subjugation, which can and will actually begin properly only with the future revelation of the Son of God from heaven. The campaign encompassing the whole universe is in good hands. The second (and last) Adam will do his thing well, we may be assured.

How well, this finds its simple but powerful expression in the brief word that stands as the final result before our adoring minds: "God will be all in all(m)." But we like to let our eyes rest a little longer on the wonderful state of things indicated in the declaration, "Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him." We do so all the more gladly because, with all the mystery that lies above or behind this declaration, nevertheless from there a very bright light falls on the meaning that the word submit must have in this whole context.

The same occurs in the two present verses (27 and 28) alone five times. Not only is there a great emphasis on it, but it is also important that its meaning becomes clear to us. The main reason for this is that such powerful words, like Phil. 2, 10, 11, are always countered: Yes, the unconditional submission clearly enough pronounced, but that can just as well mean a forced submission, made only with innermost reluctance, in unbroken defiance and irreconcilable enmity, with inextinguishable hatred and impotent rage. On this certainly not inconsiderable question very bright light falls from the passage before us, since the Holy Spirit uses the same word so frequently in very rapid succession that we are afforded the best opportunity of assuring ourselves of its meaning with great certainty. We only ask whether it is to be assumed that in the first part of the 28. We only ask whether it can be supposed that in the first part of the 28th verse, where it is said: "When all things shall be subjected unto him," the word "subjected" can denote a state of things in the great universe which leaves by far the greater part of the intelligent creation in a state of never-ending, though quite impotent, hostility and most unholy indignation and rebellion against God and his anointed, while in the next part of the sentence the same word cannot tolerate even the very slightest shadow of inner aversion or alienation? We see that there can be only one answer to this, an answer which, moreover, is in fullest harmony with what we are told in the other place about the task of the Son of God, in whom all fullness was to dwell, namely, that He should and would reconcile all things in heaven and on earth through Himself, by His blood and to Himself (Col. 1:20). This blessed submission, which every child of God begotten of the Spirit and introduced into the mystery of Christ's death on the cross has come to know from his own experience, this and no other can only be meant here. It alone offers the perfect parallel, the only satisfactory complement to the Son's own submission to the Father, however we may think of this relationship. But something else than the most perfect, deepest agreement of the will and the being cannot be said with it.

If something was still missing to establish this outcome of the magnificent submission activity of the glorious Son beyond all doubt, then it is the short but infinitely meaningful closing word of this passage: That God may be all in all. Just make a serious attempt to reconcile that interpretation of Phil. 2, 10, 11, according to which the submission of the enemies of the Lord is to be for the most part only a quite

reluctant and forced one, with this single word, and one will convince oneself that there arises a screaming, indissoluble contradiction which takes away all ground from any such interpretation. God is to be all in all, when millions of reprobates through all eternity would like to consume themselves in hopeless enmity against him, if only they could, rather than acknowledge his holy, perfect and just rule? This is a quite incomprehensible thought, which we calmly reject.

"God all in all(m)". Our believing, adoring spirit may well stop for a moment at these great words, with which the consummate triumph of divine love, omnipotence and wisdom is expressed. The speech is so simple, so clear, so unfathomably deep in it. Who can even now think it through to the end? Its content surpasses all our concepts and imaginations. God not only all in one, even if significant number of faithful elect, as the orthodox churches –and community doctrine wants. This is an absolutely inadmissible restriction of this true apostolic statement. Here there can be no question of any, even the slightest exception or restriction. The plain wording forbids such an interpretation. Nothing less is proclaimed here than the complete satisfaction of all legitimate claims of the great Creator God to all his creatures, personal and factual. For the last word in this last sentence may be referred, according to the Greek, just as well to the impersonal, as to the self-conscious and intelligent creation (including human beings and angelic beings). And creaturely they mean nothing less than that every creature will have found its everything in its God and creator then, i.e. will correspond completely to its actual original purpose. This is the brief but all-embracing and sufficient expression for what is elsewhere in Scripture called the consummate reconciliation of heaven and earth, visible and invisible, through the Son and in the Son and to the Son. Only with the only difference that here as a final result the Son after completed work of reconciliation hands over a creation brought to fullest harmony to the Father and lays it at his feet and thereby also puts himself at the disposal of the Father for further service, still undreamed of by us. For that after thus accomplished work neither the Father nor the Son should somehow cease all their great, marvelous efficacy and cease to reveal themselves and to be active, also seems unthinkable to us. We must confess that we are faced with thoughts, for the execution of which we still lack any firm clue in the present. Only one thing is certain, God will never cease to be God, nor will he ever lose the ability to show and reveal himself in an ever more magnificent way.

This brings us to the second main part of this great chapter on the resurrection of the dead. Whereas in the first part the apostle mainly dealt fundamentally with the resurrection of Christ from the dead, in the further part he now draws the justified conclusions from this for the resurrection of our mortal and corruptible bodies to immortality and incorruption.

Verse 29 - 34: "Otherwise, what would they do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead do not rise at all, what do they get baptized for the dead? And what are we also hourly in danger of? By your glory I have in Christ Jesus, I die daily! Did I fight with wild beasts after the manner of men at Ephesus, what profit is it to me? If the dead rise not, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are dead! Do not be deceived: Bad company corrupts good morals. Become completely sober and do not sin! For some of you know nothing of God, I tell you to your shame."

The first argument of the apostle in this passage touches us peculiarly. It refers to a custom of those early times, which has become almost incomprehensible to us, since the practice of baptism has shifted significantly among us, and the doctrine of baptism and its meaning no less. Thus, this word has also had to put up with many interpretations. A careful interpreter wants to have found no less than 23 different ones. The limited space available to us does not permit a detailed discussion of this question. We simply give what seems to us to be one of the most plausible interpretations, which also gives a quite good, unconstrained sense. And that is probably the main thing. We have taken it from the well-known Dächsel'sches Bibelwerk: "Whereas otherwise baptism was a reception into the congregation of living Christians, here we speak of those for whom it became a reception into the congregation of the dead who belonged to Christ, in that they were baptized while still on their deathbed. Hospitalized or

otherwise bedridden patients who had nothing but death to expect nevertheless still accepted baptism, and it was even hurried with them, even if they had not yet gone through the entire course of the catechism, and perhaps such cases occurred more frequently in Corinth at that time, since according to chap. 11, 30 deaths were frequent there. Such baptized were not baptized for the living to be incorporated into their church, but for the dead in Christ (1 Thes. 4:16). When they left this world, they wanted to join them in order to have a certain share in their hope of being raised to eternal life through Christ. But this would be a mere illusion if the resurrection of the dead were nothing. This is what the apostle wants to make the Corinthians aware of."

To this reference the apostle adds another one to his own constantly endangered situation, which prompts him to say: by your glory, i.e., by the glory that I as your spiritual father in Christ have in you, since I was allowed to bring you the gospel of the crucified and risen one (to which one may compare 1. Thes. 2, 19 may be compared), I die daily, that is, I am daily in danger of life from my bitter enemies, the unbelieving Jews back and forth (2 Cor. 4, 10; also Acts 9, 23, 24; Acts 13, 50; -14, 5, 19; -17, 5; -18, 12; -20, 3, ff; -23, 12, ff; 2 Cor. 11, 23, ff).

The rather strong expression of "fighting with wild beasts" need not be understood in the proper sense, as if the apostle had really been thrown into the arena in Ephesus and condemned to fight with the wild beasts of the desert, in which he would probably have hardly escaped with his life. Nowhere in the Acts of the Apostles or in his epistles is there any mention of such a sentence, which could only have been carried out in all due form on a Roman citizen, as he was, i.e. after judicial interrogation and condemnation. His manner of speaking is sufficiently explained by other examples of Scripture, both Old and New Testament. We refer to passages like Ps 27, 2; -22, 13, 14, 17; Matth. 7, 6; -10, 16; Acts 20, 29; 2. Tim. 4, 17 for comparison. The particular experience he refers to here will probably be the Acts 19, 23, ff reported.

But our attention goes to the justification of the apostle's eagerness to die, exposed to daily death: What good is it to me if the dead do not rise? Then it would be utter folly for us, the apostles of Christ, to risk our lives day after day instead of taking refuge in every serious danger. Then those philosophers among you in Corinth would be quite right with their wisdom: Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow all will be over with our death. His serious warning to the Corinthians can probably only be explained by the fact that in that community such philosophical views of a purely materialistic nature had quite taken hold. The Corinthians, as it happens also today, have flirted with such light views of life and let themselves be infected by them to the alarming damage of their good, evangelical customs of spiritual discipline. From such philosophical intoxication a thorough disillusionment was necessary.

That they knew nothing of God, who adopted such questionable philosophy, is not too strong a rebuke. It is exactly on the same lines as the one that Jesus gave to the Sadducees at that time. He had given them, to their imagined story with the woman who had seven husbands, the answer: You are wrong because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God (Matth. 22, 29). This is a clear indication of where the doubts about a real and physical resurrection of the body from death, grave and decay to immortality, which are also rampant in our time, are leading. Let us beware of this leaven of the Sadducees.

Verse 35-38: But, will anyone say, How shall the dead rise? With what kind of body shall they come? Thou fool, what thou sowest shall not live, except it die! And what you sow is not the body that is to become, but a mere grain, perhaps wheat or of some other fruit. But God gives it a body, as he has ordained, and to every seed its own body.

With these words the apostle now turns to the great second main theme, the question of the nature of our resurrection body. It may be admitted, however, that this is a question or questions of great interest

to every thinking man. One cannot put them on the account of mere undue curiosity. Otherwise, the Holy Spirit would not have given the apostle so much information about it to communicate to us.

One has often been tempted to take the somewhat strong word: You fool, or you fool, with which the apostle introduces his explanations, as a sharp rebuke for asking such questions in general. But probably wrongly. Rather, it seems to us that the apostle's first argument is in itself of such self-evident simplicity that it sufficiently explains and justifies the sharp rebuke. For what Paul mentions first is a reference to processes in the visible creation, which for every thinking observer already give a sufficiently clear answer to the first question asked: How, i.e. with what kind of a body will the dead come out of the graves? To this the apostle answers first that without previous dying a bodily resurrection is not to be thought at all. With this he returns to the broad foundation he already laid in the first main part, when he justifies the undoubted certainty of the raising of Jesus Christ from the dead with the divine basic law of the raising of the dead in general: If the dead do not rise, then Christ has not risen either. With this it is also clearly stated that the divine procedure of giving everything, but also everything into death, is the natural prerequisite for the bringing forth of the new life in Christ by raising the dead. And the Creator has expressed this elementary truth clearly in the whole of nature, which represents a regular cycle of dying and reviving. All plant life is possible only through the dying of the seed sunk into the earth. As our Master explained, "Unless the grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Thus, according to the apostle's argument, it is only through dying that the human body is made capable of new life. This is a view of the fundamental importance of dying that will do much to reconcile us to the mortality and frailty of our wonderful body if we are to embrace it. This is not blunt resignation, not a dull bowing down to a blind, dark, inevitable fate, but a grateful recognition of the superior divine wisdom and omnipotence, which has understood to rob death of every sting and bitterness, especially since raising the dead is the center of all divine work and activity for salvation.

The next simple truth and realization also comes naturally to the simplest and most unlearned observer of nature, that the seed sown is not the body that is to become. Nobody expects to process the same seed into bread and to enjoy it, which the farmer sinks into the moist earth. Everybody knows that this must first die and completely perish, before from it a harvest can and becomes. These are such obvious things that it is quite explainable how the apostle comes to use such a sharp form of address as he does at the beginning. It is folly to disregard thoughtlessly these processes in creation with which we are all familiar. One can see how Scripture is not only not hostile or even hostile to a thoughtful consideration of the natural processes in the visible world around us, but actually presupposes the same in us. For the heavens tell the glory of God and the firmament proclaims the work of his hands. And again the Psalmist says: Great are the works of the Lord, who respects them, has vain delight in them. The study of nature and Christian faith are not mutually exclusive; they even demand each other.

And when the apostle says: God gives him a body, as he has determined, and to every seed his own body, then again only the application is made of the law, which is subject to all sowing work, that the same seed brings only the same harvest. No one expects to harvest cabbage where he has planted potatoes, or wheat where he has sown oats. This means that the future new resurrection body is in the closest relationship to the mortal and corruptible body sown or planted in death. It is not something arbitrary, something fundamentally different in form and species, which will arise as a new body from the bonds of decay; but God follows in it certain, firm and clear laws and orders, which are at least as reliable as those of natural growth, according to which we are certainly entitled to harvest the same grain or vegetable which we have sunk into the earth in the form of seeds or cuttings or offshoots.

Verse 39: Not all flesh is of the same kind, but one thing men have, another cattle, another fish, another bird.

If the apostle has just pointed out to us the established similarity of the grain or plant growing after sowing with the grain or other seed sown before, he now emphasizes the other law in God's great creation, that of variety and diversity. And it is significant that in doing so he leaves the soil of the plant world and takes his illustrations from the living creature that possesses fleshly corporeality: humans, animals, fish and birds. This change is most naturally explained by the fact that the apostle now comes closer to the thought of the real bodily carnality of our bodies, whereas until then he had spoken only in the image of the seed. This is a clear proof of how genuinely real the apostle teaches and thinks about this whole question of the revival and restoration of our human corporeality. His intention with these words about the different kind of flesh in the mentioned groups of creatures is probably to prepare the way and to initiate further, richer communications about the reality of real corporeality as the goal of God's ways through resurrection from death. However different the flesh of the creatures mentioned, they are all one in that a fleshly body belongs to their essential stock. In this piece there is complete agreement between man and beast. The togetherness and commonality of the whole earthly creation is thus marked. This is extremely valuable for us for the correct understanding of such explanations as the same apostle gives us in Romans 8:19-23 about the eager waiting of the rest of creation for the revelation of the glory of the sons of God, who then themselves again, as recipients of the first fruits of the Spirit as a pledge, wait for their body's redemption from all mortality and corruptibility. There also the whole creature is bound together in one, as far as the hope of redemption of the body from all corruption and vanity is concerned. In the following verses the argument of the apostle rises still higher, but without leaving the common ground of the body.

Verse 40 - 44: And there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but a different glory have the heavenly bodies, and a different glory have the earthly bodies. A different glory has the sun, and a different glory has the moon, and a different glory have the stars; for one star differs from another in glory. So also the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in dishonor and will rise in glory. It is sown in weakness and will rise in power. There is sown a natural (spiritual) body and will rise a spiritual body. There is a natural (spiritual) body and there is a spiritual body.

With these words Paul now puts the great question about the nature of our resurrection body into the bright light of the similarity and differences between heavenly and earthly bodies, which we understand from the observation of the heavenly bodies.

First of all, a not unimportant question arises, namely whether it should be read in verse 40: there are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies? Linguistically there is no objection to such a translation of the Greek word, just like Rom. 8, 11 or Phil. 3, 21, where the same word is used in both places. We cannot reject this without further ado, although our knowledge of the possible corporeality of the angels is by no means very extensive. It cannot be denied, however, that the Scriptures speak in various places unambiguously of the corporeality of angels, even though it may certainly be very different from ours. We have already recognized, however, that even with earthly bodies there are quite significant differences in the form of appearance and sensual perceptibility. Thus we are told of the angels who visited Abraham in Genesis 18, how they ate the meal prepared for them while their host stood by and ate. Even more significant and clear is the word Ps. 78, 25, where the man gathered by the children of Israel every day is just called angel's bread. Even if one wants to assume that the angels are not permanently bound to such a corporeality, which can eat earthly food like ours, it is clear from such words that they must have the ability to corporealize themselves as needed, in a way that is basically indistinguishable from our corporeality. There are so many biblical examples of angels becoming visible and tangible that there is not much left to say about it. There are already on our earth, which is very material, fine and finest substances, which cannot be perceived by our senses, like seeing, hearing and grasping, but which nevertheless carry decidedly material character. The mighty water vapor, various gases and types of air are inconceivable and unrecognizable to our eyes and hands. Now the 104th

Psalm says: He maketh his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire. But the word can be read linguistically without constraint also the other way round: He makes winds his messengers and flames of fire his servants. This means at least that between the so-called natural phenomena of the winds and the flaming fire on the one hand and the heavenly messengers on the other hand God-established relations exist, which do not entitle us to set up an insurmountable barrier between all earthly materiality and the heavenly beings, which we call angels (i.e. messengers or envoys). In addition to this there is the scientifically confirmed fact that there can be no doubt at all about the physical uniformity of the entire star world, of suns, planets and moons. If, however, the celestial bodies or lights visible to our eyes are really, as we may assume, the dwellings of the angelic spirits, then it is difficult to see why their inhabitants should not have in their bodily constitution a quite similar correspondence with their dwellings, as is the case with us with the earth from which we are taken.

Nevertheless, it wants to seem as if the argument of the apostle would not suffer any damage or weakening if one would let him write here of real bodies of heavenly beings. The following word about the different luminosity and glory of sun, moon and stars can keep its place and its weight. Only verse 40 would be more independent and the speech would go one step further with verse 41. For it is obvious that in this verse not angels but the visible, today still innumerable heavenly worlds are meant.

Now the direct word in verse 42 seems almost surprising: So also the resurrection of the dead. In the first moment it is not immediately obvious to what the significant "ALSO" should go. One would be tempted to limit the same at first to the references to the heavenly bodies made last by the apostle. But this is inadmissible after the immediately following words, because with the: It is sown corruptible etc., the apostle unmistakably goes back to verse 36 and 37 where his argument began concerning the necessity of dying for the becoming of the new and incorruptible being. And now follow some of the most vivid and plausible contrasts between the corporeality that is sown and that which is to be resurrected.

First of all, however, we note that the simple wording here leaves no honest doubt about the fact that precisely that which is sown shall and will also resurrect. There is no room here for the popular assumption that there can or will never be a use for the very dead body lowered into the grave or into the embers of the crematorium.

The first pair of opposites is: corruptible and incorruptible. Nothing is easier to understand in itself, however incomprehensible the divine procedure of such a radical transformation of our bodily materiality may seem to us. For millennia, mankind has been helplessly and helplessly on the verge of the grave and has had to leave uncounted dead body shells of loved ones to unstoppable decay. Certainly, already thousands of years ago in Egypt a procedure was successfully used to protect the framework and housing of the wonderful human body by embalming from the so horribly abominable decomposition. But is a mummy an appropriate substitute that one would like to have it with him in the house or in the room?

"And shall rise incorruptible!" Again the ancients have understood to hand down their thoughts, decrees, knowledge and ability, on clay tablets intact until our days. A procedure that has undoubted advantages over our paper books and writings. The ravages of time have neither yellowed nor worn them down. But incorruptible is still something else than rigid and dead and insensible, even if wonderfully durable. A living organism, to which death can never again approach in any form, which will never again be exposed to decay, withering and withering away. Only our God can work this.

"Sown in dishonor, rise in glory!" It is a shame without name that the most wonderful thing that ever came out of the hand of the great Creator, the human being built and formed from the dust of the earth, becomes an object of indescribable horror and horror, which after a few days, in spite of all the deep sorrow about it, must be removed from the circle of vision as quickly as possible, as food for the worms. And exactly the same structure shall rise in glory. It is hard to believe. But the Scripture is clear:

who will transform the body of our nothingness into conformity with the body of His glory (Phil 3:21). This is, as we will encounter later in verse 49, the measure and pattern of what is to become.

"Sown in weakness, rising in strength." Yesterday a giant in stature and growth, a giant in physical strength and endurance, able to defy all enemies, and tomorrow more helpless than a newborn, than a little worm in the dust. And rise in strength? In whose power? Of the Almighty, the only Mighty One, who made heaven and earth, who bears all things with the word of his power, who alone does great wonders, and is no one who can do as he does. Who gave all authority in heaven and on earth to the Son, and subjected all things to him. To rise in his uncreated, inexhaustible power, never to tire, never to flag, never to falter nor give way in the face of all imaginable opposing forces or powers, that is God's goal with those he calls out of the dust. O a wonderful God!

"Sown a spiritual body, raised a spiritual body." In order to gain clarity about the meaning of the latter expression, which can easily be misinterpreted as if it could be a spiritual, immaterial corporeality, we need only honestly ask ourselves what a spiritual body is. For we now carry such a body. Even the simplest person knows that it is not a body consisting of only soul, but a corporeality whose life stock lies in the so-called soul, whose carrier is the wonderful red juice called blood. Our soul lies in the blood, the Scriptures teach emphatically from the beginning (Deut. 17, 11; Deut. 5, 12, 23). On the cross our Lord and Savior poured out His life, that is His soul for us (Ps.22, 15; Is. 53, 12). Thus, a spiritual body is one whose life stock is no longer in the blood, but only in the life-giving spirit, which directly maintains, nourishes, controls and completely subdues all bodily functions, so that my corporeality is no longer the least obstacle, no longer the easiest fetter for all movements and undertakings of my redeemed spirit, but rather the most willing and compliant and corresponding organ for the perfect execution of everything that my spirit determines and aims at.

The true meaning of the last sentence in this context is probably this: As certainly as there is a spiritual body, so certainly there is also a spiritual body. The form of the sentence looks like a conditional one, but its content and essence is as little so as similarly constructed sentences in other places, e.g. Rom. 8, 11; or 1. Thess. 4, 14. The undoubted assurance is expressed that ours is a truly spiritual, i.e. fully corresponding to all requirements and possibilities of the spirit.

Verse 45-49: So also it is written: The first man, Adam, became a living soul; the last Adam, a living spirit. But the spiritual is not the first, but the soul, after that the spiritual. The first man is of earth, earthly; the second man is (the Lord) of heaven. As the earthly, so are the earthly; and as the heavenly, so are the heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthly, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly.

These are magnificent revelations, uplifting the heart, such as no human spirit has ever devised nor could have devised. At the yawning tomb, in the face of the ghastly decay and decomposition of even the proudest and most magical human body, the intrepid spirit of man turns back and professes itself incapable of giving a definite answer to any of the thousand poignant questions and complaints that have never ceased since death existed. In general, philosophy has not known how to help itself better than to completely renounce any reuse of just our frail corporeality for a possible future survival after death. It has been so completely frozen by the sight of what naturally fills us with unspeakable horror that it has lost all momentum and is unable to give any other consolation than that of a purely spiritual, absolutely bodiless continued existence, which has then been dressed up in the most marvelous way according to all the rules of the school as a much more sublime form of human existence than the present one or even as any other that is still supposed to have to do with material corporeality. Thus the world in its wisdom has not understood our God in His wisdom and has thus declared its complete bankruptcy. And this precisely in a field in which the human spirit never tires of asking the most urgent questions. But the highest thing that is offered to us by proud spirits is nothing but unanswered question marks.

The scripture is always right: Hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to the underage.

Here is no uncertain questioning and groping in the dark, here is calm, light, logical exposition of revealed facts, which offer the simple-minded believer no further difficulties at all, even if he is not answered in detail by all the questions about the procedure adopted by God in the process. The apostle begins his explanation with a word of Scripture: It is written, "The first man Adam became a living soul, the last Adam became a living spirit."

There is something peculiar in the way the Scriptures speak about the creation of the first man, Adam. It does not say: he was, but he became, or became a living soul. This remark in Genesis 2:7 is based on the preceding description: that Jehovah God formed man - that is, not only the form or the shell, the body or the prison of man - from dust of the earth, then breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and thus man (as he is called as a divine entity) became a living soul. By the fact that this first human being, which thus became, is here brought into a very precise and strong contrast to the second and last Adam, Christ the resurrected, it becomes quite clear to us that at that time it could by no means have been a matter of the completed representation and execution of the last and highest thoughts of God with the humanity to be generated. We have here again one of the very numerous examples before us of what we can rightly call God's First and Second. I.e., of a great divine law, according to which everything what God has decided to bring forth is preceded first of all by a provisional, but not yet final and completed initial or trial representation. This, however, does not yet reach the last and highest goal what God had in mind. At the same time, God is in no way deterred by any failure on the part of the creature, no matter how ignoble and complete, from always keeping His original goal in mind and pursuing and carrying out the same without reservation, despite all the greatest and seemingly impregnable obstacles. Thus the present creation, subjected to transitoriness and vanity, is followed by a new creation, which will know no more withering, nor withering away. Thus, the first son of man born of woman, Cain, who became the murderer of his brother, had to be followed by another "son of man", who is called the prince of life for everything that is subject to death. Thus with a long series of first and second things and events of the same kind and order, of which the first fails each time and only the second fulfills and reaches its God-ordained final purpose. One could fill pages with examples from the Scriptures in which this wonderful and comforting law is shown in the clearest way. We call it comforting because it shows us quite clearly how God has always reckoned with all failures, even of his noblest and most highly endowed creatures, but therefore has never thought of abandoning a plan and counsel once made with the same failing creatures or even of thoroughly reorganizing it. But he will execute the same in an unheard of great way for us, of which we could have no right idea at first.

We obviously meet this divine procedure also here on the first sheet of the Bible where is reported about the becoming of the first man. Not as if our God would not have been fully able to present the first Adam in an absolutely perfect way, in fullest equality with God, right from the first beginning. Not as if God had not had the courage, or the ability, the first time, to express in a completely exhaustive way everything in Adam that He will now express only in the second Adam, Christ, according to His promise. We are not dealing with an evolution that would have to take place gradually, or even by itself, without the energetic, purposeful intervention of a great glorious Creator and Savior God, as people talk about it without knowing what they are saying and claiming. But we can confidently admit that our God's procedure with all these great mighty creations shows a conscious, well-calculated order, according to which he himself renounces to realize immediately in an exhaustive way his to us incomprehensible thoughts of love and glory for the first time. At the same time he gives every opportunity to the highest beings of his creation-wisdom and -power to completely free, unhindered moral statement to the revealed divine thoughts and plans.

So when it is clearly stated here that the first man, Adam, had become a living soul, then it is quite freely and unapologetically admitted that with this by no means the whole full measure of what was

contained in the previously expressed program of God had been achieved or even striven for: Let us make man, an image in our likeness. For, as we know from the later additional revelation of our God, only the second and last Adam, Christ, is the image of the divine being, the completed radiance of his glory (Heb. 1:3). Only in the risen and exalted one at the right hand of God dwells the whole fullness of God bodily (Col. 2, 9). Yes, one can calmly admit that in the expression "living soul" there is an unmistakable approximation to the animal nature of all the rest of creation, which is subordinate to man. The Scriptures also designate the animals with the same designation "living souls". That with it no lowering of the human being on the same level with the animal one, originally intended by God, can be meant, is obvious. On the contrary, it expresses on the one hand the high character of the animal world, which is subordinated to man as ruler, and which we do not even know in its original form and nature, which has not yet been subjected to vanity and decrepitude. On the other hand, the so close and intimate relationship and kinship of man with all the other creatures entrusted to him and to be ruled by him and to be redeemed one day, which longs for the revelation of the sons of God (Rom. 8, 19, ff), comes to the fore.

Above all, however, the apostle is interested in confirming in the most definite way that with the creation and the fall of the first man, which took place soon thereafter, the divine intention with regard to the image of God of this crown of his work of creation was by no means exhausted, and that an abandonment or complete failure of God's original intention is just as unthinkable. Against this the apostle resolutely defends himself with reference to the second (and last) Adam, Christ, who became a life-giving spirit. It is very significant that Christ is not only called the second, but definitely the last Adam. So there is no need for a third one under any circumstances. The other Adam will not fail to bring to exhaustive fulfillment and representation in every respect all that God had already pronounced as His intention and purpose in the creation of the first Adam, but which could not be carried out because of the fall and utter failure of that very first Adam. And since, according to the Scriptures, our God is aware of all His works from the very beginning, it may be assumed with certainty that the failure of the first Adam was also included in His reckoning, so that there can be no talk of a serious disappointment on the part of our God. On it go, indeed, also words like: The Scripture (i.e. God) has decided everything under sin, so that the promise through faith in Jesus Christ would be given to those who believe (s.a.R 11,32,33).

If now it is further said that the last Adam became a life-giving spirit, then we must be clear also there what is meant by it and what is not. First of all, it is clearly stated that Christ was not a living being, but only became one. And there can be no doubt that he only became this through resurrection from the dead. Before that he was like all the children of the first Adam in his bondage and limitation in time and space, was dependent and subject to all the natural laws and orders of earthly human life, could and had to hunger and thirst, weep and mourn, tremble and tremble, suffer and even die. But through the Spirit of glory, as the firstfruits, he was lifted and freed forever from all this bondage and lowliness, and became the beginner and foremother of a whole new humanity.

On the other hand, we must be on our guard against the idea that with the expression "a life-giving spirit" his true, genuinely human corporeality has been dissolved or completely eliminated. This would be and is a very fatal delusion, which has already caused a lot of mischief and confusion in very serious circles of scripture researchers. No, for it is written that in him, the exalted one, at the right hand of power and majesty, dwells all the fullness of the Godhead, that is, all the fullness of the Spirit, of wisdom and knowledge, of power and glory, bodily (K 1:19; -2:9). This is the exuberant, the incomprehensible and yet so indescribably great and blissful thing about this great mystery of godliness, not that the life-giving Spirit has completely and utterly cleared up all corporeality and done away with and eliminated it for all eternity, but that this unlimited fullness of the Spirit has eternally come to a perfect unity, It has come to an organic union in a true God-human personality, so that all and every hitherto existing

discord and opposition between spirit and matter has been removed forever and every gap within the whole vast creation of our God, who is spirit, has been filled up completely. Thereby the corporeality loses nothing of its peculiarity, nor the spirit of his. But the enmity between flesh and spirit, so painfully conscious to us all until this day, between the body of this death and the new being of the spirit, which however has already chosen our mortal body as its temple, is and remains for all times completely eliminated and will never again torment or disturb a human child, when this scripture will have found its full fulfillment before us, i.e. when we will bear the image of the heavenly one. A divine dualism has never rightly existed between spirit and substance or matter, for both are equally wonderful components of all created things that have intelligence. But on the ground of the old creation, which was recognized only by us so far, such a dichotomy arose by the entrance of sin into the creation, from where the biblical basic concepts of spirit and flesh originate, in which this unnature and enmity found its corresponding expression. But since human philosophy does not reckon with sin as such, but considers man as he is as normal, it consequently derives its concepts and designations quite wrongly from what exists, without taking into account the revealed fact that all flesh has corrupted its way on earth, and that the same lusts against the spirit and vice versa. In this way, all theological thinking, which is philosophically oriented, has inevitably gone astray and on the wrong track, whereby fundamental and excessive confusion has come into the interpretation of the Scriptures!

In verse 46 it is again particularly emphasized that it did not become so by chance, as it became both with the first and with the last Adam, but that here, as everywhere, our God has and follows his own firm, unchangeable and well planned order. The spiritual blood life of the first man had to and should first have its full opportunity to come to terms with the divine rule. This happened, with the result that the soulish man proved to be quite incapable to even understand his God and creator, let alone to follow his will in all pieces and to acquire his pleasure. The pious, educated and powerful world has finally rejected the first and only man, born of woman, to whom his father was allowed to testify and testified, this is my dear son, in whom I am well pleased, the only one whom his enemies were allowed to challenge: which of you can prove a sin against me?, the only one who never needed to be ashamed of any thought, word or deed, he was finally rejected and expelled and murdered. Thus the spiritual man with all his still so honorable and highly educated descendants is and remains judged for all times. The attempt is worth all the sacrifices it has cost, for now it need never be repeated. The matter is finally settled before the eyes of the whole angelic world, which is not only deeply interested in this, but actively involved, for from it originates the sin, the darkness, which have now been overcome and made harmless forever.

That it is said that the first man was from the earth and therefore earthly, wants to mean that in the last reason another result of the development and history of the spiritual man was probably not to be expected. Our God never indulged in exaggerated ideas or hopes in this respect. He was fully aware of what it would mean when he formed and built man out of the earth dust of a dwelling, already then permeated by death forces, of the former outstanding high angelic spirit who became Satan. And who then without much difficulty drew the spiritual man into his own spell circle and involved him in his fall. These were all factors and moments about which our God must have given himself a clear account before he acted. He estimated the costs with perfect wisdom, i.e. with careful consideration of everything that would serve for the final execution of his wonderful counsel of love and for the likewise thorough thwarting of all machinations of the adversary. And so it also happened. That only a personal entry of the living God Himself into the most intimate connection and fellowship with the creature alienated from Him and hostile to Him could create change and bring healing here is obvious to every spiritually oriented person. From the earth help could never come to the fallen and lost world. The help is only in the name of Him who made heaven and earth. The word "the Lord" is only weakly attested in the text, and may well be omitted altogether, without the sense and the scope of the sentence suffering a loss because of it.

With the words of the 48th verse then the pleasant and quite delicious conclusion is drawn, which completely reassures us about the final outcome of the whole procedure of God with both Adams, the heads of the whole, only two kinds of human world. The first sentence: "As the earthly one is, so are the earthly ones" - has been explained by our apostle in a very detailed way, e.g. in the first two chapters of his letter to the Romans, with the proof that the whole Adamic mankind is abandoned to sin, alienation from God and ruin, without any distinction, which is otherwise very popular among people. All sinners, that is the judgment of truth, from which there is no appeal. No progress in culture, no careful selection of the purest or noblest races and sexes, no religious cultivation of the soul, mortification and self-sorcery, no deep immersion of the human spirit in the essence of things, none of these things has ever produced a single exception to the inexorable rule: What kind of the earthly, what kind of the earthly. What is born of the flesh is and remains flesh, ennobled, refined, extremely charming and graceful, - but always only mortal, withering, decrepit, God-estranged flesh (Joh. 3, 5, 6).

So shameful and bending this, so uplifting and delighting the second: What kind of the heavenly, such kind the heavenly. The same inexorable law of solidarity, of the organic equality of beings. There all sinners, lacking glory before God; here all children of the same spirit, of the same divine nature, of the same incorruption, immortality and glory, filled with His fullness, to be His fullness, His glory, His eternal glory. Thus, God triumphs over all soulish, carnal unpleasantness and self-chosen piety.

Verse 49 brings the crowning conclusion to this execution in the declaration, "As we have borne the image of the earthly, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly." The one is as certain and inevitable as the other is undeniable fact. These are unshakable, victorious certainties, which carry us high above all earthly lamentation, all anxious and distressed questions, how will everything end with mankind, which just today is racing against itself in such a way that one would like to come out of one's senses and could become mad at everything human. This is a view as only our glorious great Savior God can give, who directs all things according to the counsel of His holy and perfect will of love, and whom everything must serve, so that it nevertheless goes daily according to His word, even if everything seems to go haywire in the world. He does not lose control! With majestic calmness and security he pursues and achieves his glorious goals, because Jesus lives! And all authority in heaven and on earth is given to him.

The word of bearing his image reminds us again that from the beginning to the end of this important chapter it is always about the transfiguration of our real human corporeality, of which he became a part, just like us, by birth from a mother's womb. It would make no sense to speak of bearing his image if he were only a spirit without essence and form, as some think, in spite of the rich instruction of these apostolic explanations. Already the comparison with the image of the earthly, by which only our mortal, Adamic corporeality, which is subject to transitoriness and decay, can be understood, demands such an honest treatment of this expression.

What it has meant to us to bear the image of the earthly, we know from the painful experience of the weary millennia that lie behind us. Certainly, the Adamic mankind has achieved great things in the field of beautification, ennoblement and refinement of our earthly existence. The modern man of culture enjoys indisputable advantages, comforts and conveniences, which were not known in the same extent in former times. Whether the enjoyment of these has served mankind as a whole for inner advancement must remain undecided. We emphatically deny it. As far as can be observed, the constant increase of the external advantages and pleasures of life has only increased the covetousness of the people and has by no means been conducive to inner satisfaction. It is becoming more and more difficult to make people resign themselves to their earthly fate, even if it far exceeds the situation of their peers only a few decades ago, in such a way that they are content with what is there. Today, in the vast majority of the populations of the various civilized countries, even those who have been taken up and determined by the Gospel, the apostolic word is hardly understood: "If we have food and

clothing, let us be content with them. It is considered backward who does not constantly and with great zeal strive to "get ahead in the world," as it is called, that is, to increase his income and with it the possibilities of making his earthly existence ever easier and more beautiful. The desire to get rich is also considered not only permissible and harmless, but almost perfectly compatible with a "decidedly Christian" attitude, as long as one tries to achieve it only by honest means.

Even if one puts one's ear to the hearts and moods of the warring peoples of the earth today, what does one hear? Oh yes, a deep, hot longing for a final cessation of this horrible, insane murder of the blossoming youth of the nations, a longing even for a lasting peace among nations, which shall no longer be followed by war. But if one continues to listen and to investigate, for what purpose does war-weary mankind want this peace? Does it really want to seriously turn back from its previous nature and doings? Does it really want to say goodbye to the hunt for wealth and well-being, for more pleasure and enjoyment? Has one really come to the conclusion that life is more than food, the body more than clothing, and that man in truth does not live on bread alone, but on every word from the mouth of God? Yes, if one were to hear this, how soon would our God be entreated and repent of the terrible sorrow that his humanity brought upon itself through its carnal mind, which was only focused on earthly things. Where then are the certain and pleasing signs that this has become or is to become fundamentally different? Which of the warring parties or groups has written such a "war aim" on its banner? None. They want peace, even permanent peace, so that they can go back to earning and enjoying as before. It is shocking to perceive that after more than four years of such horrible visitation and ruin harvest from such flesh sowing!

But this, too, is part of the great divine program; for our God will not be able to deal with the soul of mankind completely until it has emptied the yeast of His holy and righteous wrath and has finally come to the conclusion that only in the Lord of heaven and earth, in the rejected Son of the great King, the Crucified and Risen One and the One to come with His appearance and His Kingdom - lies the true salvation, the true peace for the poor world and mankind. It seems that there is still a long way to go until such reflection and realization.

But what it will mean to bear the image of the heavenly one still goes far beyond our thinking and imagination. God has revealed to us through his spirit what no eye has seen and no ear has heard, and what has not come into the mind of man, what God has prepared for those who love him and his appearance. For we know what has been given to us by God, since we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit from God. But still we lack every measure, every experiential capacity for a clear conception, satisfying our whole thinking, of what this actually entails, to bear the image of the heavenly, the last Adam, the Lord of glory, the one to whom the angels are subject, the mighty and the powers; the one who has the name above all names in this and the future world time. What will it mean to be conformed to him, a reflection of his glory, an image of his being? What will it mean to never be able to die again, to be raptured forever from all fatigue, slackening, slackening, passing away and withering away? What, to call a corporeality ours, which is bound to no place and no time any more, for which distances are no more barriers? A corporeality that is no longer an inexhaustible source of complaints and obstacles, of temptations, of inertia, of mistakes and errors? When all the organs of the new body are in perfect harmony, not only with each other, but with all the fullness of divine life, will and being. When no more discord passes through our thinking, feeling and willing? When we will recognize just as we are recognized? When there is no area of divine wisdom and revelation in heaven, on earth and under the earth, into which we would not have unhindered access, in order to follow the traces of our glorious head at every step, the longer, the more completely, without measure and barriers, without veil and cover, into the eons behind us, as those still before us and before Him. When every movement of our redeemed being is tuned only to the one note, to please Him, to glorify Him,

never again to seek ourselves, to live ourselves. It is impossible to imagine what all this will involve. It will be far more than we can ask or understand.

Verse 50: "But this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither shall corruptible inherit incorruption."

The words contain a very noteworthy warning of the apostle and at the same time rich instruction about the future kingdom of God. For it is obvious from the apostle's way of speaking that no other form or phase of the kingdom of God can be thought of here than the one that is still future, completed in glory. This follows first of all from the use of the word inherit, which can only refer to the future, while that which in the present state of the kingdom of God, as long as it still exists in mystery and exists in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (see Rom. 14, 17, 18), does not want to be the object of future inheritance, but present conscious possession. On the other hand, the word incorruption also points unambiguously to the great glorious future, since our glory is to be brought to light through resurrection and transformation, as the following verses show in more detail.

If we are now told that flesh and blood cannot inherit the future kingdom of revealed kingship and majesty, then this only wants to confirm again what we were allowed to follow as a golden thread through this whole chapter, namely that God's great kingdom thoughts and goals can and will only reach realization through resurrection. For by flesh and blood is meant here and also in other places our natural, spiritual, i.e. blood life. But our flesh is corruptible and all its splendor and beauty is like the flower of grass. And the blood, the lifeblood of our corporeality, is the real source and hearth of decomposition. With its decomposition begins the actual decay. The future kingdom and its Christ, however, is conceived as an immovable, imperishable kingdom, whose bearers and regents will and must all be immortals.

But there is more in these words. The expression "inherit" clearly points us to the sonship in the future kingdom of glory; for only the true sons will inherit, as it is written: If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. And another time the Scripture says: The son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the free. The blessings, privileges, duties and joys of the future kingdom of the Anointed One will be shared by countless thousands of faithful, great servants, subjects, peoples and multitudes, the saved and the redeemed all at once, but they are not to be regarded as heirs of the royal dignity and position in the proper sense. As it goes without saying that the great all-embracing kingdom of the anointed one will not consist of only co-rulers. It is also quite clear from the writings of the prophets that in the days of the Messianic kingship on earth, for example, the people of Israel will be partakers of the richest blessings and privileges of the regiment of the Anointed One in mortal flesh, with an exceptionally large offspring promised to them, under which the terrible death of children will completely cease, without death itself already being completely and finally abolished. Isa. 60, 22; -65, 20, 23; Zech. 8, 4-6.

So what is said here applies only to the heirs of the kingdom, i.e. those who will rule with Christ and administer the kingdom according to the Scriptures. And it applies expressly that in a state of mortality there will never be a question, but only the incorruptible will then have and keep the rule. I.e. the new government will never be able to be touched or affected by death or corruption in any form.

If only Christianity of all centuries had believed in this apostolic word and kept to it, how much misery and wretchedness, how much cruelty, war and ruin would mankind have been spared. For the history of the Christian church on earth is drenched in blood by the attempts made again and again to represent the kingdom of God on earth by one or the other combination of spiritual and temporal power. It has been taught that the church is the real kingdom of God of promise, since Israel has made itself forever unworthy of it. And now the church must build and bring about the kingdom of God and create kingdom conditions in all areas of human life, if necessary with the help of state power. From this sad confusion

arose not only the church state and the state church, the papacy and the crusades in the past, but is the largest, predominantly Protestant of the so-called. Christian nations and governments of the earth, the American Union, as the fruit and consequence of this very delusion that the church is the kingdom of God on earth, is out to bring about, with all the religious enthusiasm of which the American people is capable, under the greatest, most heroic sacrifices of men, material and means ever made, for the whole world and mankind the promised kingdom of lasting peace, based on justice and freedom, and longed for by a war-weary world of peoples, if necessary with the utmost force of arms. This is the most shattering phase into which the present world war has entered. And there is no doubt at all that the broad masses of the most earnest American Christians and church members are as deeply and sincerely imbued with the divinity and holiness of this mission as were the princes and peoples of Europe a thousand years ago when the cry went forth: God wills it, God wills it! A relapse in the 20th century to the very darkest Middle Ages.

This is not surprising. For in the large American Free Churches the view has always been held that the task of preaching the Gospel is the conquest of the world for Christ through the church. This was, after all, the keynote struck at the great Edinburgh World Missionary Conference a year before the outbreak of the world war, to the concern of many sober, prophetically oriented missionary friends, whose protests, however, went unheeded. Now the matter is in full swing and untold numbers of leaders of the most decided church bodies over there are standing and going through thick and thin with the government and have made the slogan of the same: The world for democracy and democracy for the world theirs. The President's sermon that this goal can only be achieved by the utmost use of force, and thus must be achieved, not only does not faze these leaders, but finds their full applause. In the churches, "holy patriotism," the enthusiasm for the final bringing about of the Kingdom of God under the victorious leadership of the Star-Spangled Banner, has almost entirely taken the place of the old gospel of the Crucified and Risen One, as the most resolute official church journals all demonstrate. They are intoxicated with the great idea and boast to the world that the American government is pursuing only the most ideal goals in this war and is in no way concerned with conquest and enrichment. And as I said, there is no doubt about it, this conviction is shared by the vast majority of the people of the Union.

It is surprising how quickly this has developed. Now it is there, one will have to come to terms with it in some way. The fact that an inexorable law of cause and effect also takes place is not hidden to the researcher of the biblical prophecy. That this turn of events, which has come upon us almost as a forearmed man, will and must be of the highest consequence for the progress and outcome of this whole terrible struggle of nations, is undoubtedly obvious. Everything points unmistakably to the final crisis of Christendom. But one thing is certain, the word of the apostle that the corruptible will not inherit the incorruptible remains valid, even if the "holy war" undertaken by America to bring about the kingdom of God in the world should have a different outcome than the crusades of the Middle Ages.

Verse 51-55: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, suddenly, in a moment, at the time of the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible will put on incorruption and this mortal will put on immortality, then the word will be fulfilled that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory! Death, where is your sting? Kingdom of the dead, where is your victory?"

A wonderful secret! A great triumph! How deeply shameful that in Christendom, even among the true believers, both have been so little appreciated, so little and poorly made use of. What rich sources of purest joy and uplifting certainty, of indomitable strength and never-failing consolation lie in them.

"We shall not all fall asleep." For many a century it has been written in black and white on the pages of truth, it is still as full and unabbreviated today as it was 1800 years ago, and an unthinking Christianity

has it sung to them and sings it with uplifting emotion: All men must die. Nothing is considered more certain in Christianity than death. Hardly any revealed truth has less actual influence on the thinking and acting of most Christians than this, that we will not all fall asleep, that therefore for every generation of believers there is the undoubted possibility that they will not have to take their exit from this life and the present mode of existence via the cemetery and through the horror of death, that they therefore have to reckon quite soberly in the most certain way not with death, which is questionable, but with the appearance of their glorious Lord from heaven. But the apostolic church and its teachers, the apostles, who were filled and driven by the Holy Spirit, are openly and unabashedly accused of error, because they took and taught this constant waiting position, while it is also blatantly taught that it is absolutely necessary to prepare for death. One is considerate enough to refrain from all unpleasant remarks towards those who nevertheless reckon with the constant possibility of their removal from the earth without dying, but one nevertheless considers it a questionable, even if on the whole harmless aberration. One has allowed oneself to be firmly convinced that under all circumstances the revelation and the shuddering regiment of the man of sin must first break in before the taking away of the congregation of the Lord is to be thought of. There is no room here to go into this question in more detail. For those who would like to deal with it in more detail, we refer them to a paper on the subject entitled: "First Rapture and then Antichrist, or vice versa," which can be obtained from the publisher or from Traktathaus Bremen. This much, however, will be clear to every thinking Christian that the moment of immediacy and complete unpredictability in this question is of very great importance for the practical opinion of the believer on the expected future of our Lord and Head, and that it is just this moment to which the interposition of the appearance of the Antichrist takes away the real point and driving force.

"But we shall all be changed," is the second point of this wonderful mystery. For the divine mystery is both the preservation of a whole generation of believers from the mortal humanity of all classes, races, groups and estates, tongues and colors from dying and being buried without exception, as well as this almost even more incomprehensible transformation, or, as our apostle calls it in 2 Corinthians chap. 5, 4, the being clothed, so that the mortal may be swallowed up by life. In the whole area of our human experience there is no process that would give us any clue for a satisfying comparison. In the lower creation, however, there is something from which one or the other hint would like to come to us for an approximate understanding. We mean the quite marvelous transformation, which takes place before our eyes, of the disgusting, voracious caterpillar, which first spins its own web, in which it then becomes a chrysalis, which hangs with some threads on the wall or the ceiling, without being able to move from the place, but which under the invigorating influence of the sun's warmth bursts its narrow brown dwelling and swings in dazzling splendor through the air as a colorful butterfly. If one were not so accustomed to this everyday phenomenon, one would hardly come out of the amazement if one had never seen it. But also this comparison lags at more than one point. Only one thing presents itself quite clearly before our spiritual eye, and that is the fact that the transformation can by no means be a question of a complete discarding or leaving of the present corporeality, but this very corporeality is transformed, but not completely eliminated, thrown away or destroyed, as is often taught and believed. Such a procedure, even if the result would be delicious and glorious beyond all measure, could never be called transformation without doing violence to the simple honest literal sense of the Scriptures.

In the scriptures we are given some examples of events where obviously such a transformation must have happened. Otherwise we will not be able to imagine the removal of Enoch from the earth without having seen death. Neither the ascension of the prophet Elijah on fiery horses and chariots. No mortal body could pass such an unheard-of test of fire without a corresponding transformation. And with the third result of this kind, which the Scriptures report to us, with the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus on the holy mountain before the eyes of his three chosen disciples, it could not have been different. Even his clothes took part in this wonderful irradiation with heavenly light shine. But how we are to think

this does not illuminate. In no place of the scripture the process is mentioned in any other way than only that it is reported, but in no way explained or described in detail. We walk also there, where it nevertheless concerned completely sensuous processes, completely in the faith, but not in the knowledge or seeing. And that is good. Our great God still has a whole number of great surprises for his beloved children, of which knowledge or being able to comprehend intellectually would mean no advantage at all to us. Our gaze and our senses should not dwell on them, but in all chastity and simplicity should be occupied only with Him, with His person, with His interests, with His future mighty tasks encompassing heaven and earth. Therefore, if we always keep the gaze of faith and eager expectation steadfastly fixed on Him, the beginner and perfecter of faith, then we will be transfigured, not mechanically or magically, but organically and growthfully, into His image, from clarity to clarity by the Lord, the life-giving Spirit.

Most detailed is still the time specification, which is made here. The transformation is to happen "suddenly, in a moment, at the time of the last trumpet." The suddenness and the particularly emphasized brevity of the period in which it is to take place are understandable enough. We only note here that the expressions used here do not make it at all necessary to imagine that all the fullness of transformation on the whole, wide earth had to happen in exactly the same moment. On the contrary, it is very probable that the great process, which concerns all the living members of the body of the Christ, will not only extend spatially over all parts of the earth, but will also extend over a rather considerable period of time, whereby the transformation itself can take place in each individual case under all circumstances both suddenly and in a short moment. For it cannot be assumed that the degree of readiness of all waiting children of God will be exactly the same at the same moment, nor can it be expected that the miraculous transformation can take place without such readiness. Moreover, it is not at all clear why it should be necessary to understand the designations of the suddenness and the happening in a moment on a compulsory simultaneity. More about this in my tract "First the Dead in Christ", Bremen, Traktathaus and at the publisher.

But what does the expression "at the time of the last trumpet" mean in this context? What is this last trumpet? This is not an idle question. Nor is it at all indifferent which answer one gives to this question. But can there be, someone interjects, two kinds of answer here? Is it not rather quite self-evident, as is also assumed by most interpreters, that this designation can only go to the last, i.e. the seventh trumpet in chapter 11. of the revelation by John? We consider this not at all self-evident, not even probable. For so much is clear from the beginning that the recipients and readers of this first letter to the Corinthians, whose writing cannot be later than the year 57 A.D., could certainly not think of the last or seventh trumpet in the book of Revelation, since the same was probably not written before the year 95, thus almost 40 years later. On the other hand, it is much closer to assume that the Corinthians already knew the letters of Paul to the Thessalonians, which he wrote and sent from Corinth. In these letters, especially in the first one, there is a clear mention of the same events that are discussed here, namely the raising of the dead in Christ and the transformation of the survivors and their taking away together to meet the Lord in the air (1.Thess. 4, 13-18). And there the apostle speaks of three signals, with which the completed gathering of the congregation waiting for their Lord, both of those who have fallen asleep and of the living, is initiated and called forth, and names the trumpet of God as the last of these. It is the most natural and simple thing to think of this trumpet also here. The process is exactly the same, and there is no need to look for other trumpets.

In addition to this, it is unmistakable that we are standing here, as also in 1 Thess. 4, absolutely on church ground, while it is equally unmistakable that the seventh trumpet in Rev. 11 has to do with kingdom lines and kingdom goals. But it is quite obvious and factually indisputable that the body which is called to "inherit the Kingdom of God", as the apostle expresses it here, namely the congregation of the Lord, the Body of Christ, must first of all have found its completion in agreement with its Lord and

Head, before the execution and implementation of the divine kingdom plans on earth with Israel and the world of nations can take their prosperous course. Therefore, it is not possible, already for internal, factual reasons, to want to place the seventh trumpet of Revelation here, where it is still about the concluding events with the congregation, which shall and will execute the judgments with their Lord, which shall clear the way for the actual establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. This means that the events in 1 Thess 4 and 1 Cor 15:51, 52 must precede with inner necessity everything that belongs to the movements of the last trumpet of those seven in Rev 11.

Trumpets are characteristic signs and signals for great events in the divine activity. But our God is a God of the most punctilious order. Thus, for the completion of the work which the Holy Spirit has undertaken in this eon, an election and presentation of a church of living members to the full measure and growth of the Christ of God Himself, there is a definite final goal, the attainment of which is marked by His own trumpet, as we have seen. Later events, also highly important in their nature, have their own trumpets, which are never to be confused with those others which serve only the conclusion of the congregation, just as little is the congregation to be confused with the kingdom of God, whether or not it already stands in the most intimate organic relationship to the same. It is also necessary to divide the word of truth correctly and not to create a pious confusion, in which the clear expositions of the Scriptures are innocent, but which rather has its main source in the non-judgmental way in which prophecy is treated. To any calculations, how near or distant now the transformation of the saints would like to be, here again all clues are missing. For if the last trumpet mentioned here is not a seventh one out of a longer series, then of course every possibility is missing to orientate oneself to certain events chronologically to some extent, and with the calendar making it is once again nothing. This is in itself also a certain confirmation of the correctness of our interpretation of this last trumpet. Because we represent with consciousness and emphasis the opinion that the whole emergence and development of the present church from the nations (from which we clearly distinguish the first beginning of a purely Jewish oriented mother church in Israel, but do not organically cut off or separate) neither in its historical beginning (in the house of the Roman officer Cornelius at Caesarea) nor also in its likewise historical conclusion and exit by rapture after preceding transformation is and will remain chronologically absolutely incalculable, until the signals will sound, which 1. Thess. 4 and which are also mentioned here. These will also be heard only by those (in contrast to those sensuous events in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, which were perceptible enough to all the people streaming in and were interpreted biblically - prophetically by the apostles), who have an open ear.

But we go further:

"This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality," Paul continues. It is worth noting that the Holy Scriptures use the word immortality much more sparingly than our philosophers and theologians do. It applies the word in a fundamental sense only to God alone, of whom it declares that He alone possesses it, while worldly wisdom wearily exclaims, nay, man as such is likewise. The fact that she is once again in direct contradiction with the word of truth does not bother her much, since this is not at all a rare occurrence in her sayings. But the apostle speaks here with great clarity of the immortality of the human body, for which an overwise worldly wisdom has no use at all in its systems, which it wants to have completely dismissed, since it is only a degrading and humiliating dungeon of the sublime human spirit. It has never understood or recognized God in his wisdom.

But if any shadow of doubt or uncertainty were left in our minds concerning the use of this very mortal and corruptible body of ours for the future revelation of glory to and with the saints and beloved of God, it would have to vanish without trace before the clear determination with which it is here pronounced that this corruptible is to attract incorruption and this mortal immortality." It would be playing loose with all honesty of the biblical language, if one still wanted to speak of a complete elimination or dissolution or annihilation of the material corporeality. If words have any sense at all,

then these words declare that nothing of our own corporeality will be lost in the transformation that is about to take place, but that it will only be transferred from a state of transitoriness and mortality into a state of permanent and never transient clarity, beauty, fullness of power and vitality.

In this wonderful, inconceivably powerful and far-reaching event, only then does the fulfillment of that precious promise come into effect: "Death is swallowed up in victory." In the body of the crucified this victory became actual, as our apostle boldly concludes. Even then, the God of glory also raised us up together with him and transferred us together with him into the heavenly realm (Eph. 2:6). But now it becomes apparent only on a large scale how very realistic and real this was meant. Now, as if at a stroke, a great, mighty body, the whole believing congregation of all times, stands in immortal, incorruptible bodyhood, conformed to the body of his glory, at an unhindered disposal, as his own fullness, the full measure of his divine greatness and majesty, for the accomplishment of all that has been spoken by the mouth of holy prophets of God from the beginning.

There we understand approximately the unprecedented triumph saying: "Death where is your sting? Kingdom of the dead, where is your victory?" Long, weary millennia, filled with lamentation, woe and heartache, all mankind has sighed under the regiment of the king of terrors, oppressed by fear of death all their lives (Heb. 2, 14, 15; Ps. 102, 20, ff). Now there is not only one firstborn who may say: Behold, I was dead and am alive forever and ever. Now there stands a whole, great glorious host of once quite wretched, enslaved children of sin and death, clothed in the same body glory, filled with the same imperishable fullness of life as their glorious head, their royal predecessor and commander, the members of his body, the organs without blemish or spot, without error or limitation, without sin or germ of death, as fully entitled co-victors over darkness, death and corruption in every form. Now it can finally become spring after the horribly long winter days of gruesome death reign for the whole human world. For it is his firstfruits from all peoples, languages and tongues that he can present before the face of his Father without having to be ashamed of them, without stains or wrinkles or anything.

Now the whole world can be full of sins

Find salvation and redemption in him.

Verse 56-58: "But the sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory, through our Lord Jesus CHRIST! Therefore, my beloved brethren, be firm, immovable, always increasing in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord!"

Another scripture teaches us that death is the wages of sin, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23). These are related words. In itself, the simple extinguishing of our earthly life light would not be such a painful thing if there were no sin, no holy and righteous God and avenger, and no inexorable judgment. But the sting of death is sin. Not only because it caused and brought upon us the grim death, but because it means the alienation from God, the remoteness from God, the enmity to God.

And this abominable, exceedingly sinful evil of sin has only made the holy and perfect divine law even more sinful and should only make it more sinful. As God openly testifies: the law came along to fill up the measure of sins (Rom. 5, 20). Thus the terror and horror of sin and death are increased by those who deal in works of the law, whereby the way of peace and righteousness never leads through the law, but to the cross of Calvary and from the cross into the tomb of the Crucified, and then with unfailing certainty to the glorious resurrection in a newness of life. For Christ alone is our life, as he alone is our wisdom, namely our righteousness, sanctification and redemption (of the body).

Therefore, the thankful confession of the victory that God has given us through our Lord Jesus Christ on the whole line. It is a victory that is already realized and realized today for the believer to whom Christ has become life, because he knows himself crucified together with him to the world and to sin,

and because he has taken seriously the testimony of the apostle: "But I live, yet now not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

The apostle has come to the end of this great chapter, rich in content, and thus also soon to the end of his whole serious letter to the Corinthian church, whose deep damage he has unsparingly exposed and rebuked with great sharpness. His final exhortation is borne by a spirit of most confident confidence and joyfulness, in view of the still so sad, carnal condition of the church which he had before him in the Spirit. He knows through the spirit of revelation what he has been able to offer them, what an inexhaustible source of vitality he has been able to open up to them precisely in this chapter of the final victory of the Prince of Life over death and its sting, sin. And the second letter to the same church bears witness to the fact that the apostle was not mistaken, nor did he err in his choice of corrective and curative means, when he opened up to the Corinthians such undreamed-of treasures of wisdom and knowledge of our God in Christ. It was not idle speculation that he offered them, not high words of human philosophy and eloquence, but divine wisdom in mystery, wisdom for the mature, for perfection and consummation to the day of the future of our Lord Jesus Christ. Revelations of divine glory thoughts that never leave us lazy and unfruitful, if we make them our own in the obedience of faith, and let all our service to the Lord be determined and sustained by them. May the Lord Himself also open our hearts and senses to all the great and glorious things that we may behold with our spiritual eyes, so that even our labor may not be in vain in the Lord! Amen.