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Preface to the first edition

The well-known author, in his "Gospel of God of the All-Reconciliation" supplementing and deepening many earlier statements of a similar kind, thus stimulates anew the discussion of a question which has always been controversial within the church and will probably remain so. As long as the church has not come to the same faith and knowledge of the Son of God. The book will meet with opposition, but it must be demanded with seriousness and may be expected with certainty that the critics concede to the author that he was not guided by a shallow, sentimental optimism in his hope, which went to the utmost limits, but that only the seeking of the glory of God and the understanding of the Holy Scriptures were decisive for him. Undoubtedly, the book contains profound biblical discussions, it is a large-scale attempt to offer a theodicy (justification of God because of the evils present on earth), which fully satisfies thinking and feeling, an attempt to resolve shrill dissonance in harmony and to create a synthesis between the *Gratia universalis* (universal grace) and the *Gratia irresistibilis* (irresistible grace) of dogmatics. Many shy away from reflecting on the things discussed in this writing like entering a minefield or a maze. But we are required to give the whole Word of God the attention it deserves, and it is pious self-deception to refrain from doing so on the grounds that it is presumption and criminal curiosity to do so. So herewith many readers are wished to the book of the kind of the Bereans, of whom it is said: "They searched daily in the Scriptures, whether it behaved thus. Whatever their judgment may be, a blessing will not be lacking for them.

The fulfillment of the Lord's word runs through the experience of Christianity like a red thread: "But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth." We may expect that the closer the end of the present course of the world comes, the brighter the light the Spirit will shed on the last things of man and the world.

Berlin, July 1915 Israel Pastor at St. Matthäi.

Preface to the second, abridged edition

In difficult, dark times, the first edition of "All Reconciliation in Christ" was allowed to take its blessed course, legitimized by the Lord on many of His children. It is out of print. The unfavorable conditions in the printing trade, the immeasurably increased prices for labor and material made a new edition in its former volume seem completely out of the question. At first, I did not think of a considerable reduction. Then I received a request from a Dutch publisher to make the book available to the Dutch public in a significantly abridged form. The suggestion was to shorten the entire second part of the book, titled: Plan and Outlines (Anbahnung) - to be omitted altogether. After some hesitation and consideration, I decided not only to do this in the Dutch edition, but I also believed that I would be able to meet the many requests for a second edition without making the book in the new form too expensive and without at the same time compromising the evidential value of the biblical explanations.

So let the abbreviated testimony for the glorious, full, triumphant gospel of the great God and Savior of all men go its way. It will hardly be less subject to contestation than the more detailed treatment of the subject. But all suffering for the sake of truth means only glory. At the same time, the heart is always refreshed by grateful recognition and joyful testimonies of deep blessings received and delicious deliverance experienced. The Lord loosens the bound. He will continue to use this imperfect instrument for this purpose. To His name alone the honor and glory in the eternities!

Spiez (Bern), Switzerland, October 1920 **The author**

Part One: The Resolution of Eternities

What does the Word of God have to tell us about the purpose of the eternities, which is the foundation for God's gospel of all-reconciliation in Christ?

It is not by chance that we find the first clear statements about this deep divine mystery only in the New Testament, and that on the ground of the church, which appears as the fullness of the Christ. Early on, in the story of Abraham, we read that the Most High did not want to hide from his friend Abraham his decision to execute judgment on Sodom (Genesis 18:17). This is a shadowing of what was extensively reserved for the actual congregation of the elect in Christ, but not yet the essence of the matter.

Only there, where it is a matter of preparing the congregation to be like Him, the firstborn among many brethren, only there is the ground given on which the Spirit of God can speak freely and without proverb, without veiling image or parable, and speak of the depths of God, His thoughts, His counsels and purposes.

His congregation, which is his body, can and may and should know in what the gospel of God, through which it is primarily called, has its origin. It should be constantly before its soul, not only what place it occupies in his thoughts, but also what thoughts of God are attached to its calling and perfection, in what way it is itself called to help realize those thoughts of God in future ages.

Thus Paul writes right at the beginning of his letter to the church at Ephesus, which probably contains the most profound instruction about the glory of the body of Christ: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens through Christ, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:3, 4). These words express the matter-of-factness with which Paul views the fact that every spiritual blessing is guaranteed and offered to the believing church in Christ. From the divine point of view, this is appropriate for those who are destined and ordained to have such a share in the Christ of God that they should form one body with him.

The same thought is expressed in Rom. 8, 28: We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to purpose. Everything that happens is done for the sake of the elect, so that the eternal purpose of God may be realized in them through grace (2 Tim. 1, 9).

From this it also follows that it is by no means left to the choice or arbitrariness of the believing community whether it wants to acquaint itself with this resolution of the eternities of its calling or not. It never has the right, if it really knows itself seized by God for the fellowship of his Son, to evade the task of establishing its calling and election under any pretext. She must acquire the same knowledge, obediently enter into it with increasing clarity of vision, and place her whole life, her whole activity on earth in the light of this purpose and let it determine her.

In the further course of the apostolic explanations in the Epistle to the Ephesians we encounter even richer expositions concerning the purpose of the eternities.

This happens in a very clear way in Eph. 1, 9-11: "When he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose, which he determined in himself to be accomplished in the fullness of time, to bring together under one head in Christ all things in heaven and on earth, in whom we also have obtained a share, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will."

These words contain instruction on the deepest things of God according to different sides.

In the foreground is the fact that God has actually made known to us the mystery of his will. The believing community is therefore worthy and entitled to be introduced by the spirit of truth into the secrets of divine resolutions, which can never be recognized by purely natural, human thinking and research. Otherwise they would not be secrets. Again, however, the word secret in Scripture does not mean something that cannot or should not be known at all, otherwise it would not be possible to say here that God has let us know the secret of his will. This does not mean that there are secret teachings in the church, the household of faith, which are not there for all believers, but only for a particularly privileged class. Nor is there any room here for the idea of something so secret that it would be inaccessible to ordinary believers. No, these are things of God, hidden from the wise and prudent of this world, but revealed to the unlearned, accessible to all who wish to be under the discipline and instruction of the Spirit of Truth and Christ.

The manifestation of this secret of his will happens according to the counsel which God has decided with himself, which originates from the hidden depths of his divine being, and about which God has given himself full account. A counsel, therefore, in which all that is in God of wisdom, love, and omnipotence was offered.

What is of special interest to us now is the further explanation which is given to us about the content, the aim of exactly this divine counsel. There it is said first that its execution is decided in the fullness of the times. Obviously a whole series of time courses is set and ordered, which are all there for the fact that this decided execution takes place orderly and according to plan. This is connected to what we are told in other places of the scriptures, that God created these world times or world ages (eternities) in the Son and for the Son (Hebr. 1, 2; 11, 3; in both places the word world time or eon should be in the text instead of "world").

But further we hear what goal God has set for himself in this counsel of the eternities: namely to gather all that is in heaven and on earth under one head in his Christ. This much may already be said here that the Father has thus intended and granted His only begotten Son a position at the head of the whole created universe, which naturally excludes any thought of a successful resistance or opposition against the Son, be it in heaven or on earth.

Likewise, the simple language of Scripture, by its plain wording, encompasses the entire universe. When it is written in the first verse of the Bible: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, in this expression "heavens and earth" are understood all creatures, whether inanimate or living beings, human beings or angels.

Thus before our believing view lies a quite comprehensible program of our great God and Lord, clothed in simple language, not at all mysterious, quite worthy of him, quite corresponding to his nature. According to this, it is certainly justified to assume for God's thoughts of love with his whole created universe, with everything that includes heaven and earth, a scope, an extension that knows no limits.

Before we continue in our consideration of the apostolic words to the congregation, let us listen with holy reverence to what the Son of God says before His Father in His high priestly prayer, John 17:5: "And now glorify me, O Father, with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee *before the world was*.

These are, after all, depths of God into which we may look with holy awe, but also with childlike calm and confidence.

That word from the mouth of Jesus brings before our spiritual eye a process that took place in the bosom of the Godhead before the world was, that is, that apart from God nothing existed of all that exists today and has ever existed. There was neither space nor time, neither heaven nor earth,

neither angels nor men, nor anything created. But he, "the Word" was with God, and was God; for all things were made by the Word (John 1:1-3).

And all those words go to the same, in which it is said that God chose his church before the foundation of the world. Or that the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:20; Rev. 13:8; 17:8). But under that glory, which the Son had in the bosom of the Father before the world was, we will have to think of nothing else than just the process, when the whole deep, immeasurable miracle council of God in creation, redemption and perfection was concluded in the Son. Everything, from the earliest exits to the farthest reaches of realization, was placed in the hands of the Son.

For the execution of such a heaven and earth spanning, eternity exhausting task, all powers, authorities and authorities are at the Son's disposal. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me (Mt 28:18). Just as you have given him authority over all flesh to give eternal life to all whom you have given him (John 17:2).

In the face of such facts, there can be no question of any part, even the most humble and subordinate in the great divine counsel, ever going astray or failing, being thwarted or thwarted. The Lord's counsel is wonderful, but he brings everything out gloriously.

What he has set out to do, And what he wants to have,
That will finally come
To his purpose and goal.

There is one more thing we can learn from the fact that God's counsels precede all creation, and thus, of course, also every fall into sin, be it among angels or men, and that is this, that our God can wait. His plans are laid before the eternities, for the eternities, eons, are formations of His wisdom, which also came into being through the Son and for the unfolding of the Son's glory. And the eternities serve no other purpose than to contain in their bosom all the riches of that which is hidden in the Son in the treasures of God's wisdom and knowledge, and to let them gradually emerge in a planned way. For more on this, see the author's tract, "What Does Scripture Understand by Eternity?" Also in Scripture, "God's Plan for this Age."

No mortal mind can measure how many eons had already passed at the creation of man, during which the indignation in the angelic world had already lasted. No one can conceive how long eternities God had already borne those vessels of wrath with unspeakable patience and long-suffering before he formed the creature of earth dust through which his spirit was to come to rest and the terrible discord which had come into the heavenly world through the fall of Satan and his hosts was to be finally removed and abolished. Here, this consideration only serves to admonish us to apply a different standard than the short human one of years, centuries or millennia in all these great questions that encompass heaven and earth, for the solution of which God has made and decreed the resolution of eternities. God reckons with eternities upon eternities. He also wants to be judged in this way.

In the same epistle to the Ephesians, however, we are given further information, namely on a special side, which puts the purpose of God in a wonderful light. The apostle writes ch. 3, 9-11: "And to enlighten all men concerning the mystery which has been hidden from eternity in the God who created all things, so that now the manifold wisdom of God may be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly regions through the church, according to the purpose of eternity which he has purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

First of all, it is clearly stated that all believers are to be enlightened about this matter, not only a selection of them who would have a special inclination or talent for it. Then God is spoken of in a way that emphasizes the fact that he created everything, i.e. the entire creation as such is again

drawn into the realm of this purpose and not only the chosen community or the chosen people of Israel.

But what is especially noticeable and must be paid attention to are the words that clearly indicate the educational or instructional purpose that God has in mind for the superhuman angelic world. The manifold wisdom of God is to be shown to them in the church, that is, by what it is and is to become in the counsel and will of their Lord and Head. So God obviously intends a great visual instruction for those heavenly beings through the congregation gathered from all nations, which is bought and washed with the blood of his Son.

Whatever else may be concluded from this, one thing is certain, that the divine wisdom, that is that quality of God which always knows how to choose and use the best and most effective means for the goals to be achieved - for that is wisdom - is to be put to its highest test in this matter. Believers cannot have two opinions about the outcome of this test.

In this context, read the testimony of Scripture to this wisdom of God in Proverbs 8:22-31.

And another scripture testifies of the only begotten of the Father that he is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, that in him all things were created and all things exist (Col. 1, 15.16), and that in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2, 3). Therefore He also became wisdom for us from God (1 Cor. 1, 30). He is the Alpha and the Omega of all the ways of God in creation, redemption and perfection (Rev. 1, 8).

All this is included in the mighty word of the purpose of the eternities, which he has made in Christ Jesus our Lord.

But we have not yet exhausted all that Scripture has to tell us about the tremendous content of this purpose of the eternities. We hear still further testimony. In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, which we have just quoted, what is said about the firstborn of all creation, the image of the invisible God, is brought into very definite relation with his death on the cross, and this in a way that wants to leave no doubt that the meaning and legal effect of the sacrificial death of Jesus on Golgotha is not to be limited to this earth and its inhabitants, but also embraces the heavens.

To this end, the apostle first draws clearly and definitely by the Spirit the whole circumference which encloses the whole creation as his work: For in him all things were created, things in heaven and things on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and all things consist in him (Col. 1:16, 17).

Here the creation of every creature in heaven and on earth is attributed to the son. There can be no question of any exceptions. The greatest as well as the least creature is included.

According to this statement, not only is everything created through him, but also in him and to him. With this, even more powerful truths are stated than those of the mere creation and emergence of the universe; all created things are thereby placed in relationships of the most intimate kind with the glorious Son. If the universe is created in him, then it lies in his thoughts, claims his continued, intimate participation, can never be or become indifferent to him; he knows himself somehow deeply bound to the work of his hands; in the same lie for him values and possibilities which only he understands and measures, to which only he can do justice. The creation may turn away from him in its individual beings no matter how far, may even behave against him in the most hostile way, it remains created in him, that is, it never ceases to have an undeniable claim on his love, his omnipotence, his wisdom, all of which were active when he called them into existence.

There are basic rights and basic claims on both sides, which must never be disregarded if we want to come to a proper understanding of what the finite destiny of the whole creation is all about.

It is obvious to think that the creation has lost every right to him, its originator, by its apostasy. And it may well be said that the creatures fallen away from him, men or angels, however, have no legal ground under the feet on which they could claim anything good from him.

But it is not about the claims of the creatures to him, but about his own to the world created in him, comprising heaven and earth. And unless one finds in the Scriptures a clear rejection of the deepest claims of the Son to the universe created in him, one will simply have to allow this his primal right.

Human courts recognize the creative right of human inventors, poets and composers to the children of their minds. This is a sound principle of law. What I have created is mine in the deepest sense. And it remains mine as long as it exists at all. Even if I give up any right to compensation for the use that others make of my intellectual work, I can never get rid of my authorship, I remain responsible for the product of my intellectual work. And here should another right be able to apply? Never!

On the contrary, here is a word which should make every such thought impossible, namely the simple but well understandable explanation: *Everything exists in him*. This is not spoken in the form of the past. No, it speaks clearly of the present still existing today with all its human and satanic indignation and alienation. With all this and in spite of all this, even today the whole universe exists only in him. If he would withdraw his sustaining hand only for a moment, everything would disintegrate into nothing, pass away, disappear. He carries everything with the word of His power (Hebr. 1, 3).

Therein lies the striking proof that the Son can never think of withdrawing in any sense, under any circumstances, from the creation that has become in Him.

Especially since it is further said that everything was also created for him. In this word lies the complementary truth that the purpose and the goal of everything created is again only Christ. This is also an idea that is far beyond our ability to fathom or even to exhaust. Our understanding of the value of the creation surrounding us moves within the narrow framework of usability for the natural man, for the satisfaction of his needs, for his comfort, his enjoyment. But we are not able by nature to place ourselves on a higher standpoint in the evaluation of the purposes which all God's creation should serve. In Christ alone the right measure, the norm, is also given for this. But the Christ of God has not yet reached his God-given greatness and perfection; he is still waiting for his church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:22). We can be sure that the God-man has the fullest understanding of the original disposition of all created things toward him and toward himself. Paul's single word to the Romans about the eager waiting of creation for the revelation of the freedom and glory of the sons of God should prevent us from wanting to set limits to our great, glorious Lord as to how far he will once again know how to make use of the fullness of living beings created for him. And it is not idle speculation or foolish fancifulness to expect that he in whom all the fullness of God dwells bodily will once more prove himself to be its Lord in creation and with creation, so that heaven and earth will worship and praise him over it. We have never known creation in this way, nor will we come to know it in this way after our conversion to the Lord; for we are still waiting with it for the redemption of our bodies. For it still serves the preservation and development of our life, in spite of all the perversity that has entered into it. And also the angelic world consists of all ministering spirits, who are sent out for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation (Hebr. 1:14).

But if everything is created for him, then it is up to him alone whether he will ever get everything back into his almighty hand according to God's original counsel and will, or whether he will renounce it. But as long as the Scriptures do not reveal anything about such a renunciation, we do well to take it for granted that the Christ of God will also glorify himself and the Father in it, far beyond human understanding and comprehension.

But the words before us speak about it even more clearly and audibly. Let us listen further.

After we were told that all things consist in Him, as all things were created in Him and for Him, He is now presented to us as the head of His body, the church, He who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He might be the first in everything (Col. 1:18).

There we again encounter the very peculiar, intimate relationship of the church to its head in all these great things and tasks. It stands next to him, as raised with him from the dead, transferred with him into the heavenly realm (Eph. 2:6), as called to the fullest participation and cooperation in everything that concerns the achievement of the high goals that are set for him.

The ground on which all this should and will take place is not that of the old creation, which has fallen into death, but that of the new creation, which has been called out of death. But with the raising from the dead only a beginning has happened. He is the firstborn. And even those who have the firstfruits of the Spirit are still waiting for the sonship, the redemption of the body from the grave and mortality (Rom. 8, 23). From this it follows that everything that is promised here belongs to the great future and is therefore completely beyond our experience. It wants to be believed alone, i.e. to be grasped only on the basis of the word. The church itself walks in faith along this whole line, as intimate as its relations are to him, the Risen One. It has to trust that not in vain everything is created for him, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead.

So it has to let then also without back and reservation the further said valid. It was the pleasure (actually the decision) that all fullness should dwell in him, and everything - or the universe - would be reconciled to himself through him.

The thought of a reconciliation of the whole created universe is such a great one that it almost wants to overwhelm us. But it is certainly worthy of our great God. And if it is biblically founded, who should not exult over it from the depths of his soul and worship in the dust!

Can the expressions used here be interpreted in this way without constraint? Do they have such a weight in the Scriptures at all, undisputedly? This is the important question, to which, however, we believe we may answer with a quite confident yes, as we shall now show.

The Greek word *apokatalasso* used here occurs only twice in the NT except in this place. In the very next verse, the 21st, it is used again: "And you, who were once estranged and hostile... he has now reconciled in the body of his flesh through death. What extent, what expansion and depth, what unlimited power and completeness the reconciliation brought about by the death of Christ for believers has, there is only one judgment about it among believers. We know that we have been reconciled in the most perfect way, without any compromise or restraint. And we are also quite sure that not the slightest thing happened or had to happen on our part to make this reconciliation legally valid and effective. It happened on the cursed wood long before we were there or had ever sinned. Even our faith, as important as it was for our conscious grasp of the salvation freely offered to us, could not contribute or add the least to the full validity, the full value of the sacrifice of his body through death, which was accomplished once and for all on Golgotha.

The only remaining passage in which the same tense word occurs is Eph. 2, 16: ...that He reconciled them both to God in one body through the cross, having put to death the enmity in the cross. Here we are talking about the wonderful mystery of the completed unity of the body of Christ as it consists of believing Jews and Gentiles, for whom previously any fellowship was completely excluded, indeed downright sin. This entirely new corporate body, the Body of the Christ of God, not foreseen by any Old Testament prophet, came into being according to this Word, legally and effectively, without any action on the part of the two parties involved, through the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary. There the two were created into one new man. This is a fact that does not even depend on the faith

of those concerned, inasmuch as the believers, Jews or Gentiles, become members of that wonderful body without any intervention or inner cooperation or consent.

We are obviously dealing with a work of God in Christ, which is independent of the subjective belief or non-belief of the participants.

The result of this brief study of the meaning of the word *apokatalasso* in the NT is thus the following: it denotes an act of atonement or reconciliation of God in Christ, the legal force, meaning and scope of which is in no way made dependent on the consent or rejection of the hostile creatures involved, and the actual realization of which is likewise not subject to any restrictions on any side.

According to this, it is clearly stated here that in the divine counsel the scope of the one sacrifice of the body of Christ comprehends an effective reconciliation encompassing the whole created universe, for the coming about of which the behavior of the hostile creation, whether in heaven or on earth, would not be decisive or determining, but which carries in itself the guarantee that it will be realized just as certainly as the wonderful unity of the body of Christ itself.

In view of the conditions of brokenness, wretchedness, infirmity and incapacity that exist in God's community to this day, this is also an object of faith, i.e. something that simply wants and must be believed at the word. Exactly the same is the case with regard to the effectiveness and eventual actual realization of the reconciliation of all that is in heaven and on earth through the sacrifice of his body, which was legally accomplished by Christ on Golgotha. Here we can already see something of the manifold wisdom of God, who sets such tasks of faith for his church in Christ, as they are reflected in their own realization.

But I have exactly the same right, according to the clear statement of the Scriptures, to gather all my thoughts under the obedience of Christ and to count with the same confidence on the final, effective reconciliation of the whole created universe as on the completion of the glorious body of Christ. If the reconciliation of the whole universe is in question, then, with inexorable logic, the perfection of the Church of God is no less in question. For in order to express what happened for both of them on Golgotha, the Holy Spirit uses exactly the same language, as we have seen.

If something was still missing to assure us that the reconciliation referred to here really means and expresses a complete elimination of all enmity between God's creatures in the heavenly regions and on earth and their Creator God, then this is answered by the following words: that He might bring peace through the blood of His cross, by Himself, both in heaven and on earth (Col. 1:20b).

Now all of us who have become believers - and no one else knows - know what this precious peace is all about. We know that we, who have truly become children of peace, have never owed it to our own efforts, our higher wisdom, our greater worthiness or any merit. We have had to receive the peace of God exclusively as a gift of grace, which only entered our peaceless hearts when we allowed ourselves to be overcome by the love of God in Christ Jesus. For all of us it was only a question of our own declaration of bankruptcy to our great God.

How long I have laboriously struggled,
Sighing under sin and pain
But when I surrendered to him,
His peace poured into my heart.

That is, among all who have ever come to peace with God and in God, not even one has brought himself to peace; it was *his* wonderful work of grace from the very beginning. And how ashamed and astonished we have been when we realized that we were actually reconciled long ago, without knowing it, without having or realizing anything about it.

Does the blind, God-estranged world stand differently today than we all once stood? And has not the wonderful, almighty Lord already triumphantly dealt with so many thousands of such blind, darkened, hostile people? And are they anything other than first samples of his mighty grace, who should learn to measure for themselves from what depths of darkness the grace of God can and will save?

And if it is clearly stated here that according to the purpose of the eternities Christ is to bring peace through himself, both what is in heaven and what is on earth, how can there be anyone among those who have received and tasted the exuberant greatness of his grace who would want to set a limit to his ability to bring all things to peace!

At the same time, faith retains its right and its importance. Only that which is written is unbreakably upheld: This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent (John 6:29). And another scripture confirms this: For it is God who works in us both to will and to do, according to His good pleasure (Phil. 2, 13). And again it is written: God has included all (Jews and Gentiles) among the unbelievers, that He might have mercy on all (Rom. 11, 32).

Thus also this whole question dissolves again into the one: Will the Son be able to bring everything that has not yet responded to God's thoughts of peace to peace in Him, finally, without remnant or smear?

Are we, who really still put a question mark behind such a question, completely sure that unconsciously our self-love does not play a bad trick on us here? Are we before HIM completely free of every deeply hidden thought: Yes, with me he has probably had it not quite so difficult, I also do not belong to the very worst specimens! Or else: Yes, I have also believed!

Wouldn't that mean that your peace rests in the deepest depths on something that originated in you, that emanated from you, that was and is ultimately your own - on your faith?

But now we must consider what is said of what is in heaven and on earth. How are these words to be understood? Can we really think of the fallen angelic world, which is still today in indignation and enmity against God? And are there also other scriptural words that state and confirm this?

In order not to make a mistake, we have to keep in mind that according to the word we have just read in Col. 1, 20, we are clearly talking about creatures who are to be brought to peace and reconciled. This, of course, forbids us to think both of men already redeemed or received into the heavenly regions, and of unfallen angels who have remained holy and blessed. Both classes have no need of reconciliation, the former because they already enjoy its fruits, the latter because there has never been any apostasy or enmity among them.

Let us now go back to the word from Eph. 1, 10, which was already illuminated above, where we encountered the content of the divine counsel that all things in heaven and on earth are to be united under one head in Christ. There it is spoken of a position of Christ as head, which includes all inhabitants of heavenly worlds as well as the inhabitants of earth and their depths (Hades).

The same thought, but in a different form and setting, is encountered at the end of the first chapter of Ephesians, where we are told that God not only raised his Christ from the dead, but also seated him at his right hand in the heavens, high above every principality, power, might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come (v. 21). For all of these, Christ is destined to be the head.

The same language is used by the apostle in Philippians, where he prophesies that at the name of Jesus all the knees of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth will bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10,11).

The seer of Patmos sees the same result in the spirit of prophecy: And every creature that is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that which is upon the sea, and all that is therein, I heard say, To him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, be praise, and honor, and glory, and power, from everlasting to everlasting. (Rev. 5:13).

A very strange and important statement, which belongs here, is contained in the Epistle to the Hebrews in the explanations about the meaning of the one sacrifice of Christ (9. 23): So it is necessary that, while the images of the heavenly (the utensils of the tabernacle, the earthly sanctuary) are purified by bloodshed (animal sacrifices), it is done for the heavenly itself by better sacrifices. Here it is quite clearly spoken of a necessary purification of the sanctuary of the Most High in heaven itself, and this was undoubtedly brought about by the sacrifice of the Son of God on Golgotha.

From these words arises without any compulsion the right to think of the whole sinful, apostate, hostile creation, be it angels, be it men, in the context of what is in heaven and what is on earth. We believe that they are all included in what is said about the reconciliation accomplished once and for all through Christ and about the fact that he will bring all to peace through himself.

Part Two: The Execution - World Completion and All-Reconciliation

It is necessary that we become clear from the divine revelation about the existing guarantees for the hoped-for final and definitive realization of the all-encompassing redemption thoughts of our great God and Savior. It is often emphasized by the opposing side that a hope, as we represent it on these sheets, does all honor to the heart of those who present it, but this is finally nothing else than the product of subjective wishes and hopes, which lack any objective justification.

Let us dwell for a moment on this strange objection. What does it mean, if we look at it closely? It is the recognition that an outcome of the great world development, as we expect it, would not be undesirable or unpleasant.

It is said of a blessed servant of God, who is now already with the Lord, that in a quiet confidential hour he put the question to his disciples: Brethren, if it should now turn out that our great God would nevertheless finally deal with all unbelievers and ungodly men in such a way that they would all bow the knee to him out of a free, full heart and confess in blessed bowing that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father, - would you have anything against it? At first in mute amazement, then shyly the answer: "No, Inspector! And if it were even the case that Satan and all his army would at last willingly bow under the gentle yoke of our glorious Lord and serve him in holy adornment for eternity, would you have anything against it? About it still deeper astonishment and still deeper silence. Finally, however, the answer: No, Mr. Inspector. To which the latter replied: Neither do I!"

Are we saying too much when we openly state that today hundreds, no, thousands of God's dear children stand exactly like this on this question? They would certainly not have the least objection if it really came about as we believe and openly teach. But what does that mean? Is it also conceivable that countless children of God should be so completely abandoned by the spirit of truth, if they dare to whisper in each other's ears, albeit only very quietly, in the most intimate circle of brothers: Yes, it would certainly be beautiful, indescribably beautiful and glorious, if finally all enmity, all resistance, all sin, all corruption would disappear forever from the whole of God's creation, never to be seen again!

Is such a sequence of thoughts really only a precarious aberration of enlightened Christian hearts? Is it a sacrilegious criticism of the only wise, almighty God and Lord, who, according to the orthodox doctrine, should have irrevocably decided to deliver all the uncounted millions and billions of his

beloved creatures, who persistently rebelled against him, irretrievably to endless, unfortunately also purposeless and aimless hell torment?

Of course it is, if those who advocate endless damnation are right. There can be only one opinion about this. The iron consequence of this orthodox doctrine can be no other. If it is right, then it is simply presumption for any mortal man to dare to think, without good reason, of something which from the outset belongs to the impossibilities, since the end result of God's ways with by far the greater part of His intelligent creatures, angels and men, could be or ever become no other than that they must persist in endless, desperate raging enmity against their God and Creator.

We emphasize here in particular that we attach absolutely no importance to the fact, which we do not doubt, that a very large number of children and servants of God inwardly sympathize with our teaching and proclamation, as we understand it, and only prefer, for reasons for which they alone are responsible before their Lord, not to let these sympathies be heard. For truth is not determined according to the majority, not according to human judgments, still less according to human feelings and moods.

We are deeply aware of the full implications of our coming forward openly with this knowledge, which we firmly believe is gleaned from the whole of Scripture. We believe, therefore we speak. But we cannot but call attention to this strange phenomenon in the psychology of the Christian consciousness of our day. How to explain this phenomenon?

No one, even among the strictest advocates of the Orthodox Church doctrine of endless damnation, can deny that such an outcome of things would be not only beautiful, but highly gratifying and desirable.

No one can question for a moment that this would immensely increase and enhance the triumph of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

No one can deny that neither the omnipotence, nor the wisdom, nor the love of God would suffer any damage, abridgement, or impairment if such a result were to crown God's rule in judgment and grace.

No one can claim that the strictest justice, the inexorable holiness of God could not be fully satisfied by eons of terrible judgments on obstinate rebels. In short, the mere acceptance of such a hope nowhere meant even a modest abrogation of all the great and glorious attributes of our God and of his Christ, as they are presented to us in the sacred writings of the Old and New Testaments. Whence then this persistent, very strong aversion to such a recognized desired hope?

Can children of God really be more merciful than their father? Can they really devise thoughts that exceed in beauty and delight all that the Scriptures (according to orthodox teaching) contain in this field? Would the pious singer have been mistaken, nevertheless, when he sang:

It is the eternal mercy,
That transcends all thinking!

And would even the apostle be wrong when he asserts that God "is able to do exceedingly more than we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" Eph. 3:20 ?

Wouldn't it be rather, much rather possible that we humans have not fully understood our great glorious God, that we have measured Him with our own dimensions, that we have drawn barriers? Not only does it seem so to us, but it has become our deepest conviction from Scripture that it is so. And to bring proof of this is the special task of the remaining part of this scripture.

A The crucified and risen Lord

Praise be to God, we are saved
From guilt and fear through Jesus Christ,
Who according to the Scriptures was killed for us
And rose again.
Now the whole world full of sins
Can find grace and forgiveness with him!

For it is written that Jesus Christ, the righteous, is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours, but also for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). And this same disciple, whom Jesus loved, was also a witness when the departing Master came before His Father and said to Him: "Father, the hour has come, glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You" (John 17:1). And penetrated by the whole immeasurable scope of this glorification of the Son by the Father and of the Father by the Son, he adds the words: Just as you have given him authority over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to all whom you have given him (v. 2).

Has the son been mistaken in his father, has he misunderstood him, has he set his expectations too high? And again, has, will the father be able to deceive himself in his son? We do not yet see the end of all that is implied and decided in these prophetic, confident words. But we see Jesus, crowned with glory and honor through the suffering of death, who by God's grace has tasted death for all (Hebr. 2, 9). (According to another reading, this passage reads: that he has tasted death for everything except God, i.e. God alone).

This much is certain, that according to all Scripture the only source from which life, salvation and renewal can flow for a lost creation alienated from God is the blood of the innocent and unblemished Lamb, which was shed on Calvary for the sins of the whole world, and by which Christ reconciled to Himself and through Himself all that is in the heavens and on earth (Col. 1:20).

On this single, all-sufficient foundation we stand with the entire believing Christianity of all confessions when it comes to the decisive answer of the great questions that occupy us on these pages. No one can lay a foundation other than the one that has been laid (1 Cor. 3:11). With Paul we want to know nothing but Christ, and that the crucified.

If full satisfaction has not been made once and for all for all and every sin and transgression in the whole wide creation, human and angelic world, with his one-time perfect sacrifice, then it is vain to speak of any restoration of all things.

There is no guarantee for the individual's salvation that would have another, firmer, more unshakable foundation than the final salvation of all. For there is no other foundation than the one that has been laid. And this reason is not subjective faith, but objective God's act, whose legal force and effectiveness can never be conditioned by anything existing in any creature. We will have the opportunity to come back to this.

Now, for an all-round, clarifying determination of the legitimate fruits and consequences of Christ's death and resurrection, three major basic questions come into consideration: *the question of law, the question of will, and the question of power*. These shall now occupy us.

1. the legal issue

When the Son of God, the second Adam, was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, the tempter, after taking him to a high mountain and showing him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, came to him with the request: To thee will I give all this dominion and the glory thereof; for it is delivered unto me, and I give it to whom I will. If therefore thou wilt worship before me, it shall all

be thine Luk. 4, 6.7. We do not want to examine here whether and to what extent this claim of Satan to the right of disposal over the kingdoms of this world was justified or not. The words here are only meant to illustrate to us that there is, however, a sinister power, that of darkness, which lays claim to at least a significant part of the divine creation.

It is also well known that in Christian thinking the idea has found wide room that Satan, however, is a powerful and zealous competitor with the Son of God for the possession of human souls. It is one of the most popular depictions of serious evangelists to describe how on the one hand God in Christ is competing for souls, on the other hand Satan and his angels. And when the decision is made against Christ, it is considered a foregone conclusion that such a soul has fallen under the dominion of the devil, and that forever, if it does not convert before its death.

For such a view, however, some things can be cited from Scripture that seem to give it a certain justification. For example, when the apostle says: "To whom you present yourselves as slaves for obedience, you are slaves, whether to sin for death or to obedience (of faith) for righteousness (Rom. 6:16). It should be noted, however, that the apostle does not say anything about Satan, to whom one becomes a slave, or who thereby acquires a justified legal claim on us, that we sin again and that with consciousness.

Again, the apostle knows how to speak of the Father saving us from the authority of darkness and transferring us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:13). But again we have to keep in mind that authority is by no means synonymous with possession or property rights. No monarch, no matter how absolute, is the owner or proprietor of the land he rules, still less of its inhabitants, unless they were in a relationship of serfdom, and that ceases with the death of either the ruler or the serf.

Nor should we ignore the fact that the same apostle clearly speaks of being given over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit might be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 5:5). Another time he says of believers who had suffered shipwreck in the faith that he gave them over to Satan so that they would be chastened not to blaspheme anymore (1 Tim 1:20).

But it would be going too far if one wanted to draw the conclusion from such statements of the apostle that these souls have now become Satan's rightful property or possession. If a bad criminal is handed over to a court servant to be chastised with rods, then such a servant does not become the owner or possessor of this criminal.

In the popular conception of Satan and his rights, a lot of medieval, monkish thoughts and fantasies have penetrated, which are without scriptural substantiation. And unconsciously, even the more purified faithful thinking has remained interspersed with many of these quite erroneous ideas.

We cannot see that the holy Scriptures anywhere grant the prince and god of this world the right of possession or disposal over any human soul, however sinful and depraved.

However this may be, this much is perfectly and irrevocably clear from the apostolic teaching on the significance of Christ's death, that through it the Son of God has forever acquired the sole and exclusive right of disposal and determination. For the time being, this is already clearly expressed in the above-mentioned word of the Lord himself: Just as you have given him authority over all flesh.

Paul also writes in Col. 2, 14.15 that Christ put away from among us the guilt letter that was against us..... by pinning it to the cross and thereby at the same time publicly pilloried the rulers and powers of darkness and triumphed over them.

In addition, there are certain declarations such as 1 Cor. 6:20: You were bought at a high price; therefore praise God with your body! With what we are bought, Peter tells us: not with perishable silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, the innocent and unblemished Lamb (1 Pet. 1,

18.19). The same apostle warns against false teachers who introduce corrupt sects alongside and deny the Lord who bought them (2 Pet 2:1).

Therefore, whatever the legal claims of the God of this world may be, it is quite undoubted that since the death of Christ on Calvary all rights to the whole creature in heaven and on earth have come into the pierced hands of Him who gave Himself for us, without any limitation or condition, and who died and came to life again for this purpose, that He might be Lord over the dead and the living (Rom. 14:9).

Thus, in principle, everything that was already originally his exclusive property by creation has again come into his hands with legal force. Already early in the divine revelation, Jehovah, as God of Israel, lays claim to the whole earth and thus establishes his good right to choose Israel from all peoples to be the people of his property in a very special sense (Ex 19:5).

And in the prophet Ezekiel we encounter the same: Behold, all souls are mine. As the soul of the Father is mine, so also the soul of the Son is mine (18. 4). Moses also calls Jehovah the God of the spirits of all flesh on two occasions (Deut. 16:22; 27:16). And Job testifies: That in his hand is the soul of all living things and the spirit of all human flesh (12, 10).

And when Paul proclaims the "unknown God" in Athens, he speaks of him thus: The God who made the world and all that is in it, since he is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands, since he himself gives life and breath and everything to everyone. And of one blood he made the whole human race to dwell on the face of the earth, for in him we live and weave and are Acts 17:24 ff.

Just as clear and certain are statements like Joh. 1, 3: All things came into being through the Word, and without the Word there was not one thing that came into being.-Rom. 11, 36: For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to Him be glory forever and ever.-. And: For in him (the firstborn of all creation) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and all things consist in him (Col. 1:16,17).

These are original and fundamental rights, which are inviolable in the one who was created from eternity to release everything from death and bondage and to bring it back to God.

What answer can we now give to the question: Was the sacrifice of His body on Calvary sufficient on all sides to transfer to Him any other, alien liability of any creature, by whatever cause, absolutely and without abatement, so that His right to it can never again be in question?

Isn't it true that there can be only one answer to this question for the enlightened child of God? It is finished! For with one sacrifice he has perfected for eternity all who will be sanctified, who will ever come into the hand of the holy God (Hebr. 10:14).

This is the unshakable rock foundation on which all our hope of salvation rests securely for time and eternity. But this foundation is broad and long, high and deep enough that the possibility and legitimacy of salvation, of the redemption of all lost creatures, can rest and be founded on it. There can be no depths of sin to which this does not reach. No heights of creaturely presumption, of satanic self-exaltation, which would not be surmounted and destroyed by it. No widths and lengths of sinful ruin through generations upon generations that would not be swallowed up and overflowed by the powers of grace of that one sacrifice.

But equally unshakably certain is the fact that the legal validity of Christ's sacrifice can never be doubted, so far as its inalienable right of ownership and disposition is concerned, by any subsequent act of rebellion, disobedience, impudent unbelief. We must be particularly clear about this. And this

is most likely to happen by clearly visualizing how the sacrifice of Jesus Christ came about in the first place.

What were the driving and contributing forces? There it stands in fullest clarity and sharpness before our spiritual eye that nothing else than the free, sovereign grace and love of our great God has been the driving motive. Scripture testifies in the most definite way that the slaughter of the Lamb of God was predestined before the foundation of the world (1. Pet. 1, 20; Rev. 13, 8). There every thought of human or creaturely participation must fail from the beginning.

What God decided in the bosom of the eternities in his son, nobody has been his advisor. From no side any suggestion has happened, let alone aid or confirmation or approval. None of the powers, worldly or underworldly, which have participated in the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, were aware of what they did, much less did they want to carry out the premeditated counsel of God as such in clear knowledge and with clear intention. The definite opposite is witnessed to them! Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do! And Paul explains 1 Cor. 2, 8: If the rulers of this world had known the divine wisdom, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Thus, it is beyond all doubt that God is solely and exclusively responsible for the offering of His Son for the salvation of the lost and destroyed world creation. If the plan and advice was laid out perfectly wisely and executed with absolute guarantee of its final success, then neither angels nor men have the least part in it. God alone has the whole responsibility and also the whole unabridged honor, the sole glory. These are actually elementary truths and realizations, which every believing child of God can and will sign without hesitation.

And yet it is very questionable whether many of God's children have ever given themselves a clear account of the other side of this simple truth, whether this act of God in Christ could ever be called into question in its legal validity and legal force by any creaturely act or statement about it. In other words, whether the legal claim of the Son of God to all creatures in heaven and on earth and under the earth could ever depend on the attitude of any of God's creatures to this act of God.

That it makes a great, resounding difference for the personal appropriation of the salvation acquired through Christ's death, how one stands by it, goes without saying. He who believes, says the Scripture, has life; he who does not believe does not have life, but the wrath of God remains on him. He who does not believe is condemned. It has to be like that, it cannot be any other way.

But this matter is not at issue here. We want to be quite clear about whether and to what extent the purely legal side of this question, as far as it concerns the Son of God, is affected by the fact that any creature of God behaves in a rejecting or unbelieving manner against the salvation that has actually been achieved.

We will never see clearly in this great matter of the final salvation of all lost creatures and the complete restoration of all that is somewhere and somehow corrupted and doomed to death by sin, as long as we only maintain the standpoint of our own behavior in this. We must come to understand that the question of law has nothing at all to do with the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of men or angels or devils.

The validity of Christ's sacrifice never depends on our faith. For when the sacrifice was made in the heart of God, there could be no question of faith or unbelief. There was no one who could believe it. So this factor did not come into consideration at all, since in the counsel of God the sins of the whole world were already laid on him.

But if this factor did not have a say when and before redemption came about, then it cannot and must not have a say or even be regarded as decisive when it is a question of whether, under all circumstances, Christ has the sole right of disposal and determination over all the creatures he has purchased by his blood.

Let us make clear what we are talking about by looking at some of the statements in Scripture. Paul declares through the Holy Spirit in 2 Cor. 5:19 that God was in Christ and reconciled the world to Himself and did not impute their sins to them. Now this gospel has been preached in the world for almost two thousand years and everyone knows how the world has behaved towards it up to this day, namely mainly rejecting, mocking, indifferent, hostile. And not least there, where the Gospel was preached most and most clearly.

In view of this quite undeniable fact, what do we make of the apostle's grand-sounding words that God has reconciled the world to Himself? Is it not proved by the fact that the apostolic conception of the scope of Christ's sacrifice is quite erroneous, exaggerated and exaggerated? If the results of the evangelization of the world so far are decisive for the correct appreciation of the work of Christ for the lost world, then one must make quite significant deductions from the apostolic declaration. Then, as far as the real salvation of the world so far is concerned, a very alarming bankruptcy comes out of it, since so far not even one tenth of all who have heard the Gospel have believed the same and are reconciled to God.

It is quite justifiable that we, as evangelists and preachers, with the deepest earnestness and holy zeal, emphasize again and again: Be reconciled to God; that we exhort with all patience and teaching. But facts are and remain facts, and they must be reckoned with. What are we to say now? Did Paul exaggerate? Has he taken his mouth too full? So far, the results of our evangelism and mission do not prove him right.

And in addition to this, it is taught with great zeal that all those who did not accept the salvation offered to them during their lifetime are definitively and hopelessly damned and lost for all eternity.

Does this balance out this appalling account? Does this produce a better, more pleasing result for the God whom Paul preached that he had reconciled the world to himself? Or is it really helpful that God should console himself with the fact that he has such an immeasurable abundance of worlds and creatures that have not yet been lost that he does not feel the loss of millions of rebellious people or devils any more than Baron Rothschild feels the loss of a penny on the street. (This example was actually used by one of our most zealous evangelists).

Let us take a word of Peter from 1. Pet. 2, 24: Who bore our sins in His body on the wood. And in connection with this the testimony from 1 John 1:2,2: He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

When did Christ do this? More than eighteen hundred years ago. We were not yet alive. We had not yet committed a single sin, nor had any of us or the whole world commissioned God to place our sins on the cursed sacrifice so that they would be blotted out and canceled forever.

Did God take it upon Himself all by Himself at that time, without first asking whether it was right? John says: not only for us believers of this world time, but for the whole unbelieving, godless world! And did God know beforehand and consider how few of us would thank Him later for doing it this way without any help from us?

Has God realized that after almost two thousand years, only a very modest part of those who have even received the news of this action of His would agree with Him?

Isn't it true that no child of God can doubt this for a moment? God must have known this and considered it beforehand. He can never have been surprised or disappointed by it. It is quite inconceivable that he should ever have to say to his Son, "We miscalculated. Our intention was the best, but the results are against us. The means we used are far from sufficient to actually achieve the end we sought." There can never be such a thing.

So we may illuminate this matter from different sides, but it will always have to remain the same: God must nevertheless remain right in his word and be justified in all his works. Therefore, we cannot but put the question of law in the foreground and warn the congregation of God in the most decisive way, but only not to try to give an answer to these enormous questions from the point of view of our subjective behavior against the deed of God or from the present results of a single age that has passed since Golgotha.

But if this fundamental question of the eternal, inalienable and inviolable right of the Son to all creatures purchased by him remains untouched by what has hitherto been done by men or devils for or against his gospel, then we may quite confidently and with full assurance leave it to him, that in his own time he will also in his own way, with perfect certainty and unfailing success, assert his rights to all and every creature of his hand, which he has purchased with his dear blood, against all claims to the contrary, even against all refusal on the part of those involved. Right must remain right. His chair would be shaken, if he would give up even one iota of his right to all creatures, Is he not the good shepherd, who leaves ninety-nine sheep in the wilderness and goes and looks for the lost one, until he finds it!

It is also part of our position of faith that in all these great things we may not or must not look at the visible, but at the invisible. We may and want to give our great and glorious Lord the unconditional trust that he will not lose any of all that is his, because the Father has given it to him.

For the final solution of the legal question, however, not only the clarification of the fact belongs that the Son of God is in truth the sole ruler of all creatures in the whole wide universe of creation. For we are witnesses of the fact that uncounted millions of his creatures either still live in complete ignorance about these inviolable legal claims to them, or behave towards them partly rejecting, partly even hostile and rebellious.

The vast majority of people living on earth have not yet learned that the Father sent the Son and subjected everything to him. His own chosen, beloved people persistently refuse to recognize his legal claims and pay homage to him to this day. The same is true of the greatest number of those who call him Lord with their lips but do not do what he says.

And in the angelic world there is still no sign of a decrease of rebellion and enmity against the victor of Golgotha. . Whoever would like to judge by the appearance could easily come to the thought that there was no decisive victory over sin, death and the devil at Golgotha at all. For it is quite obvious that these hostile powers seem to go about their business unweakened and unhindered, as they did before Golgotha.

There is no talk of a historical cessation of satanic machinations in the various spheres of life, nor of a diminution of mortality and sinfulness in mankind. These undeniable facts should make us think. For the one who knows himself saved from the authority of darkness, from the present course of the world and transferred into the kingdom of the Son of his love, these actual conditions in the world of men and angels do not mean any restlessness or concern. We know that we have come out of death into life. We know what is given to us by God, who has made us acceptable in the Beloved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. We know how to resist evil and claim the field in all circumstances. We know that God has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But all this is knowledge that lives with us only in secret, i.e. unrecognized and misunderstood by the world that is still in trouble, and in which the god of this world blinds the senses of unbelievers so that they do not see the bright light of God's clarity in the face of Jesus Christ.

But this is the same world that God, according to His own word, reconciled to Himself through the death of His Son. And indeed, our Savior God has not left us in the dark at all about this hostile,

rejecting attitude of the present world. Rather, through His New Testament apostles and prophets, He has prepared us quite clearly that throughout the present course of time there will be no significant change in this hostile attitude of Satan and the humanity He is allowed to control. We must endure such a struggle with the princes and powers of the aerial circle in patience and faith and bring it to a victorious end, and yet not for a moment disregard the fact that God has given us to this very hostile world as his ambassadors and plenipotentiaries who may offer his bitterest enemies not only full forgiveness but even sonship in his house.

But what results from such a state of affairs for the correct judgement of the great question of law which concerns us here? Under no circumstances is it to be thought that the Son of God has somehow condescended to a compromise with the hostile powers in heaven and on earth.

Therefore, all those who stop the truth as it appeared in Christ by unrighteousness will be judged all the more severely, of which Israel is a shattering example. Therefore, not only the devil and his angels, but also the beast and the false prophet, who have done the works of the devil in this age as his main agents, are awaiting the other death, the lake of fire.

We say again, it cannot and must not be otherwise. For God does not allow him to be mocked. Therefore, the condemnation and hardening of all who have not accepted the love of truth now is quite right and inevitable.

But therein lies not yet the final solution of the great question of law which concerns us here. When the Son of Man will say in that day: Those my enemies who did not want me to rule over them, bring them here and slay them before me, then this belongs inevitably to the solution of the question of the complete submission of all creatures under his yoke and scepter. But it is far from being the whole solution or even the most essential part of this solution.

Because that he takes revenge on his adversaries and throws them into the hellish fire, into the second death, only the kingdom of death gains in expansion and content. With it the enmity is not finally eliminated and taken out of the way. This can only happen when the prisoners of death and destruction now also become pardoned, as it had to happen with us. First in the dust of death, in the depths of judgment, then to childship, to life, to the fellowship of his glory.

Therefore it is also written that the Father gave all judgment to the Son, because he became the Son of man (John 5:22,27). But God did not hand over the judgment to him, so that he would deprive himself in and through the judgment for all eternity of any possibility to ever help, redeem and liberate all those who were judged by him.

This, however, is regarded by the conventional church and community doctrine as the great final goal of the last, i.e. the last judgment by the Son of Man and asserts that He Himself condemns all beloved creatures bought to Him by His dear blood for eternal, inalienable property, never to come into His dug hands, never to be able to be treated by Him as His really redeemed inheritance!

It is true that it is claimed that the Son of God renounces in the judgment of the highest, most glorious privilege that the Father has ever entrusted to him. He thereby definitively renounces all opportunity to somehow obtain his good, dearly acquired right to nevertheless make the creatures bought by him with blood happy and to lead them towards their original destiny to glorify him.

And this is taught in the opinion of doing God a service in view of the obvious fact that Israel is exposed before our eyes only for a time to the most terrible judgment, the hardening, and we have in the Epistle to the Romans the most succinct explanations that this should never mean the final rejection of Israel.

How deeply ingrained are the medieval ideas about the meaning of God's judgments. Even after today's believers have been enlightened about God's ways in judgment and grace with the people

of their choice, they do not want to let go of seeing and teaching the judgment of damnation as the final goal of God's ways with angels and men, i.e. all the visual instruction that our Lord gave us in Israel is lost on us. And we call ourselves believers! Do we not see what a dilemma we are putting ourselves in, i.e. the Son of God, whose cause we think we represent?

For if this were really the outcome and the final result of the righteous judgments which the Son of man is called to execute and will also execute without doubt, then this would mean that his righteous judgment would be the most effective means of forever setting an end to his actual task of saving the world. His punishing justice would then boast loudly against mercy, which it would have the undisputed right to do. But where would then be the mercy of which the Scriptures testify that it overflows where the measure of sins is full? And the same Scripture testifies that mercy boasts against judgment!

Also, this would mean that a very alarming change and transformation would have taken place in the character of the Son of God. For it is written: Jesus Christ, yesterday and today and the same forever. This would cease to be true forever. And thus the lowest foundation of the house in which we dwell by grace would be shaken.

For if the Christ of God can ever turn away, on principles of righteousness, from any creature, however lowly sunk, however terribly vilified, whom he has purchased with blood, and expressly renounces this right, which no one disputes, then of his redeemed no one has any guarantee that a like thing will not befall him. For if only justice is granted to us, who can stand?

No one can say, "Yes, but we believed in the gospel! That is not the question to be decided here. But it is a question of whether the Son of God can be induced under any circumstances, for the sake of justice, to renounce his inalienable right to all men and angels completely and forever, to take care of such terribly lost people at all, to help them out of the deepest depths of hell, - provided he can! The question of power shall occupy us in a moment.

Here we should and must deal quite honestly and thoroughly with the question of law. For this lies at the heart of every creature's assurance of salvation. If there is any possibility at all that Christ, under any circumstances, might refrain from making use of his sovereign right, his unlimited authority over all flesh, then everything is in question. Then no believer has absolute certainty that all is well with him forever.

For this security never rests in our nature or attitude, but only in his unchanging faithfulness. If, however, he should change, as is claimed of him, that on the last day he will forever turn his back on uncounted creatures and finally prevent himself from ever reaching them with a ray of his light, from touching them with the power of his imperishable life, from saving them even from the second death, then, yes, then there is no guarantee of final salvation for any sinner.

Jehovah-Jesus could have condemned and cursed already before Golgotha according to his inexorable holiness and justice. Only the cross gives him the new character that he can now also justify the ungodly and remain just. His highest justice is now not the punishing, condemning, executing one, but the saving and renewing one. It means to deny the cross, if one now makes a judge out of him, who should only be able to condemn, but in certain cases no longer to save. It is to ascribe to him that he can deny his highest character, if one teaches that he condemns dear souls bought by himself to endless being lost.

We must get out of the pious illusion as if there is security for us because we have become believers, i.e. through something that has happened in us. We must learn to rest from our faith in our faithfulness and in a completely different way in the grace that brings salvation to all men, which does not rest or rest until the last lost man or angel is found. For Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. He cannot change. And as long as anyone is lost, he cannot but seek it until he finds it.

However, then the next question is, whether he also wants! And whether he can! The two questions will still occupy us now.

2. the question of will

Actually, there should be no such question of will. For if anything is corroborated by Scripture, it is the will of God that all men be saved and all come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2, 4). And Joh. 6, 39: 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 on the last day. And Joh. 3, 16: God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. And Hos. 13, 14: I will redeem them from the power of the realm of the dead, I will ransom them from death.

And yet we have to deal with this question. When the Lord once found him at the Pool of Bethesda who had lain sick there for 38 years, the first thing he asked him was: "Do you want to get well? The question may have alienated many who read it. It seems so natural to us that a sick person wants to get well. And yet the will to live and to get well must first be awakened in us, as is illustrated here.

Now it is not God who must first have His holy, perfect will awakened, for example, through our questions and petitions. Rather, we have to have the sense and understanding for the manifestations of the divine will of love awakened and strengthened.

We generally have a very high opinion of the importance of our own will in matters of salvation. We are jealously concerned that God should not do anything that would impose the slightest constraint on our "freedom of will," that it should not be most carefully preserved. We are very quick to judge that God cannot do this and that at all, because he must not come too close to our "free will".

We are, however, too liberal in granting the predicate "freedom" to our will, which is, after all, by nature completely enslaved to sin, and for which there can be no question of true freedom for life and peace, until it has become truly free only through complete submission to the holy will of God, i.e. until it is now able to want good and divine things again, which it was just as incapable of doing in its natural state as a dead person is of walking or flying.

We have learned all kinds of beautiful phrases from human philosophy, but behind them there is nothing but deception. Paul says Col. 2, 8: Do not be deceived by philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the principles of the world and not according to Christ. Indeed, one must be wary of being expelled from the synagogue of science if one speaks disdainfully of philosophy, to which theology has sold itself body and soul for centuries. Its rubrics and doctrines are valid in the halls also of the theological science.

This is not to say that the study of philosophy does not have a very high educational value. Certainly it does, especially in that one learns to recognize how thoroughly God has made the wisdom of this world foolishness and how completely he renounces that one should recognize and work on him and his wisdom with the instruments of philosophy. But whoever even thinks that human philosophy is necessary or even indispensable for the understanding of divine mysteries is and remains deceived. And whoever teaches this, deceives all those whom he teaches.

The scripture knows nothing about a free will of the fallen sinner. Thus Jesus teaches the pious Jews who had already become believers in him, the Messiah: If ye abide in my word, ye shall be truly my disciples, and shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free. And the Jews had not misunderstood him, but rebelled, saying, How sayest thou, we shall be made free? We are already so. But Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you: Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin....When therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed (John 8:31- 36).

How could the Scripture honestly say: It is God who works in you both to will and to do according to His good pleasure (Phil. 2, 13), if in every human being the will would already be truly free by

nature to do good, to live according to God's good pleasure? The word of God knows us better than all philosophical systems, which make us beautiful words about the high human dignity, about our ancestral moral nobility and such deception more. The Scripture declares: There is no difference, they are all sinners, under condemnation, children of wrath by nature.

Therefore, true moral, divine freedom of the will only begins with the thorough renewal of our nature and our mind through the spirit of Christ. As the Scripture says: "Stand therefore in the liberty to which Christ has set you free, and do not be brought again into a yoke of bondage (Gal. 5:1).

Only in Christ Jesus are we made free from the law of sin and death in our members on earth.

And the highest goal of true Christian freedom is the complete renunciation of all self-will, the absolute abandonment of all ego life, the conscious, victorious non-ego, but Christ in me. Only a slave of Jesus Christ understands the secret of highest freedom of the will. This lies solely in the direction of unconditional commitment to the holy and perfect will of love of God in Christ. Never in the emphasis of one's own will, however good it may be, over his own.

But no human philosophy knows anything about such freedom, nor can it, because the natural man with all his philosophical education and sharpness of mind knows nothing about that which is of the spirit, it is foolishness to him, he cannot understand it, because it must be understood spiritually, in the power of the spirit that makes alive (1. Cor. 2, 14. 15).

The inevitable consequence of this disregard of the divine verdict of condemnation on human wisdom, of which the whole theology, even resolutely faithful, has been guilty for centuries, is a profound obscuration of the basic concepts of divine knowledge. This obscuration reaches further and deeper than one would like to assume. But it reveals itself clearly when it comes to the consideration of such elementary concepts as that of the divine will of love for the salvation of all people. One simply cannot see this. Why not? Because one's field of vision is full of false and exaggerated concepts of the meaning of the creaturely human and devilish will.

Before every thought of a restriction of the majesty of the "free will" of the creature one has a horror. One thinks that the throne of God would shake if a mortal creature would suffer even the slightest insult or disregard of his free will. But when it comes, as here, that one has to deal with the most covenantal and unambiguous explanations about the holy and perfect will of God for the salvation of all men, then one manages with the greatest peace of mind to console oneself: God wants well, but if man does not want, then God cannot! With it one considers the thing for settled. The highest instance - the creaturely will - gives the decision.

And now this declared will of God for the salvation of all his lost mankind rests on his eternal, unathomable, unchangeable counsel of love, carried and wrought by his perfect wisdom, with which he is aware of all his works from the beginning, with which he has previously considered and taken into account all possible difficulties and obstacles that might oppose his will from any side, and he declares after millennia: Yes, I want all men to be saved and all to come to the knowledge of the truth.

And then we little mayflies of human beings come and presume to say to his face: Well and good, but if man does not want and if the devil does not want, then all your good will does not help you? You do not get your will, but the devil gets it! He thwarts your glorious, holy will thoroughly and for all eternity!

Now, if it were only unbelieving philosophers who made such speech, then it would still be bearable. But they are children of God, who let themselves be brought to strike such a tone against God. That is shocking!

Is it possible that one can give an account of what such an attitude means? Far be it from us to accuse anyone of deliberately insulting God's majesty, of deliberately interfering with God's most

sacred rights, of deliberately degrading His honor, glory and honor. We know only too well from our own shameful past how easy it is to take such a position, thinking that we are doing God a service, defending His honor and the holy judicial seriousness of His words. But one does not know what one is doing.

For this declared will of God is born of the immeasurable love energy of his own being, which is love, holy, righteous, true love, which never can nor will pact with sin or unrighteousness, which rather made the most beloved, the only begotten Son, the holy and righteous one, who knew nothing of sin, sin, than that the foundations of his throne of worlds and judges should ever be shaken.

Love has seen to it that the question of law is finally settled once and for all. No one can condemn anymore, because God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, and did not impute their sin to them.

And love, coupled with holiness and justice, triumphs at the empty tomb from which the Risen Lord emerged to set Himself above all the heavens, to make a complete triumph of all the powers of darkness and death, and to put them in the stocks forever.

And perfect righteousness delivers all judgment, all dominion, all power over life and death into the hands of Him who gave Himself for us and took upon Himself the sins of the whole world.

There is no faulty, weak link in this chain. It holds. And what is thus bound to the throne of the Exalted One, all the machinations of hell and all the deceitfulness of sin can never separate from it again. God has thus bound the whole created universe to the throne of the glorious Son with His holy will and forethought.

Has God thought it all over and considered it thoroughly? Yes, truly, probably better than humans have ever thought out a philosophical system. Do we have a correct appreciation of the divine wisdom, this perfect, unclouded, infallible insight into all depths and heights of creaturely and divine possibilities?

And to this wisdom should have remained hidden that all planning from eternity was quite beautiful and very desirable, but the thing would nevertheless finally fail, at least for the most part, because of the wrong, stubborn, defiant, demonized will of the creature embraced by God's love, which was created through him, for him and in him?

This wisdom should have been so blind that our limited, poor philosophy first had to show it the little light, how vain and in vain all the love effort, all the immeasurable love energy, the incalculable depths and heights of the holy love will of God and his Christ were, in order to really reach the declared goal?

And it should have given by the Holy Spirit holy men of God in the pen, to declare, God not only wants that all men are saved, but He is the Savior of all men, especially of His believers; and to substantiate thereby: All things are possible with God! Or: Who directs all things according to the counsel of His will! Or: Our God is in heaven, he does everything what he wants!

But we do not want to expose ourselves to the reproach as if we wanted to close our eyes in overzealousness for the only holy and perfect will of God for the salvation of his whole lost world and creation and for its infallibly sure realization in judgment and grace against the seriousness and the greatness and gravity of our moral responsibility as creatures endowed with will. But in doing so, let us place the main emphasis on the fact that this responsibility in the highest questions and matters begins only with our enlightenment and renewal by the Holy Spirit. Before that, we are simply not free; we lack the capacity for a truly free opinion in matters concerning God and His salvation.

Therefore, the most serious and severe words about the unquenchable fire and the terrible waiting of judgment and fiery fervor that will consume the unruly are also addressed to disciples and

believers. The question in the Letter to the Hebrews is: How will we escape if we let such salvation pass us by.

In evangelism, it is the popular way to pull out all the stops of hellish threats to persuade the unconverted to repent. It is almost taken for granted that it is not us but those outside who are threatened with hell. In the Scriptures, it is only those who knew "that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do the signs which thou doest, except God with him," and who, in spite of such knowledge wrought by God, branded his deeds wrought in God as works of demons, who could commit the blasphemy of the Spirit, which was not to be forgiven in this eon or in that.

So also in Scripture the brother who had sinned grievously is handed over to Satan by the apostle's decree "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and after your spirit and mine have been joined together in the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" 1 Cor. 5:4,5.

These are guidelines that are hardly observed and understood in our days, but they are clear and reliable. Whoever follows them does not go astray. A believer, a member of the congregation of Christ, is handed over to Satan, but not, as it is traditionally understood, to endless destruction, where the grace of God could never help him, but to sharp chastisement of the flesh, so that the spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus.

Nor is there a lack of clear examples in Scripture of what the appeal to human freedom of choice is all about in the matter of our salvation. One of the clearest is the conversion of the great apostle Paul to the Gentiles on the way to Damascus. He himself describes the process three times in great detail. His heart full of threats and murders against the disciples of the Lord, he is suddenly surrounded by heavenly light, brighter than the sun, his body thrown to the ground and his eyes blinded, but inwardly wonderfully overwhelmed by the clarity of God in the face of Jesus Christ, whom he had been persecuting. And in a few moments the inner transformation happened: Lord, what do you want me to do? Broken, bent, contrite at the feet of the Risen One!

One only needs to ask oneself the single question whether God the Father or the Lord Jesus asked Saul before, whether it would also be right for him if he thus revealed himself to him, whether he would also put up with such a sudden revelation of the Risen One - in order to recognize immediately that such a question is more than idle.

But did our glorious Lord do any violence to the personal freedom of will of this murderous Pharisee? If someone had asked the apostle about it, what would he have answered?

As he himself looked at the matter, he tells us quite freely and openly: it pleased God, who set him apart from his mother's womb and called him by His grace to reveal His Son in him (Gal. 1:15, 16). And to his son Timothy he writes: "But for this reason mercy was shown to me, so that Jesus Christ might first show all patience in me, as an example to those who would believe in him for eternal life (1 Tim. 1.16).

But after the new light had dawned on him in the Son of God, he could well say - but not before - I was not disobedient to the heavenly appearance. His willing had begun (Acts 26:19).

Now, quite obviously, the conversion of the apostle is not at all a pattern of the conversions wrought by the Holy Spirit during this whole present course of time through the gospel of Christ. We are not knocked to the ground by sudden appearances of the risen Lord from heaven, blinded in the eyes and thus overcome by Him, but the rule has remained until this day as Paul himself clearly describes it Rom. 10,17: So then faith comes from preaching, but preaching through the word of God.

His application of his conversion to others who are yet to believe to eternal life must therefore be to another age, when God will make use on a large scale and scope of the same wonderful way of overcoming his bitterest enemies who have murder and threats in their hearts.

And the word of prophecy does not leave us in the dark as to who is meant. For the prophet Zechariah says 12:10: "They shall look upon him in whom they have pricked, and shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only child; and they shall be grieved for him, as one is grieved for a firstborn child.

This is what the greatest prophet, the Son of God himself, announced to his enemies at that time: "You will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord (Mat. 23:39).

Whoever wants to find fault with such prophetic announcements, because he cannot see that such conversions take sufficient account of human freedom of will, cannot be helped. The Lord, however, will not be deterred by any means from keeping his promises to the smallest detail and from carrying out the example set for Paul on the grandest scale and on a world-encompassing scale. Even then, He will not be inclined to let us dictate to Himself how a correct conversion must be constituted according to all the rules of philosophy and dogmatics.

Another delicious example of the sovereign nature of our God in His dealings with the children of men is the disciple Thomas, who did not want to believe the testimony of the other disciples about the truly risen Lord, but was not condemned because of this, but to whom Jesus Himself revealed Himself in a tangible way in order to convict him. However, Thomas has to be told: Blessed are those who do not see and yet believe. But the Master himself testifies to him: Now that you have seen me, Thomas, you believe. From here bright light falls on the apostolic testimony of God, the Savior of all men, but especially of the faithful. All will be saved, all will believe like Thomas, but not in the same way as we do today. Therefore, let us beware of trying to draw any dogmatic barriers to our God.

It would be much, much better if people in believing circles would deal a little more seriously with the question - not what will become of the millions of lost creatures who have never heard the gospel, but what will become of us if we do not obey the recognized truth; if we bring an inverted, philosophically distorted gospel to those whom God lets us reach; if we make the announcement to a lost world again and again: Yes, God wants all of you to be saved, but he does not seriously think that this will happen. He lets himself be called the savior of all people, but we give you the assurance that it can never be meant that way.

We also believe in the love energy of God, because we have experienced it for our own bliss. But we believe even more strongly in the wickedness energy of the human will and know that it will sadly win the victory over all God's will of love for salvation in the vast majority of people. This is horrible, but it cannot be changed.

If you don't want, then God simply can't, because all his wanting is not sufficient to that what he has set before himself and has premeditated before the eternities! O, if one would once tremble before such a "gospel" (?)!

Can the holy, truthful God, who is sincere under all circumstances, also want something that He must have known since time immemorial that His will of love would never achieve? What kind of idea does one have of the divine will? Do you realize in what kind of light you put him in front of thinking creatures when you let him make solemn declarations that he wants all to be saved, - but!

And again, can the knowledge that in the end not grace but sin will triumph in most fallen creatures and that the second death will reap the richest harvest, from which there will be no salvation for all

eternity - if it really belongs, as it is taught, to the revealed truths, can this divine foreknowledge lie and ever have lain outside his holy, perfect will of love?

Can a never-ending kingdom of darkness, of impotent(?), insane indignation and rebellion against his holy will even endure without his will? Must not then the same God, who has known from eternity that he would establish and maintain an endless regiment of death and ruin in his vast creation - for such a regiment could not last otherwise - have wanted life, peace and salvation for all at the same time and besides for most the endless, never to be abolished death?

What a dreadful dualism is this, which one puts into the nature of the thrice holy! What kind of reliance is then still on such a God, who brings this ready? That meant nothing more and nothing less than the self-destruction of God.

But all these are legitimate outgrowths of the horrible philosophical idolatry of the creaturely will, to which one ascribes without any hesitation the ability to finally thwart and destroy the clearly declared, perfect, glorious will of love of the almighty God.

Oh, what a liberation of the hitherto bound spirit it is, when one has once seen through these dreadful chains and aberrations and has inwardly overcome them by the grace of God, when one has again learned to believe in the holy and glorious will of God's love, as it is testified to us in the Gospel of God and sealed on Golgotha, in a very simple and childlike way.

And what an unimaginable encouragement it is not to tire in the work of the Lord, to praise him to all, to let his light shine into all the darknesses of the earth, to go out with his gospel into all the world, because one knows oneself inwardly completely and indissolubly one with his own invincible energy of love, which can wait for eons, can carry, since it is certain of its final, complete triumph over all, even the most desperate wickedness par excellence. It is indescribable joy and wonderful silence of the heart, where one is then no longer tempted to whip nor to be whipped, where one learns to rest in the word of the Lord: All that my Father gives me comes to me, and whoever comes to me I will not cast out.

Learning to think big again, learning to tune into the gospel of the savior of all people from the deepest bottom of the soul without any constricting, agonizing reservation, that is unspeakably precious. Then one learns to give thanks again for death, hell and destruction, because one has recognized that everything must serve the execution of his holy will. There all fearful horror of the most terrible night appearances, which are born out of the most ghastly darkness, disappears, because one knows oneself deeply inwardly one with the divine will to overcome the evil by good. This is gospel.

3. the question of power

In this area, too, we are in great need of having our eyes completely opened to the unlimited power of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. We have allowed ourselves to be restricted and impaired by philosophical discussions of many kinds about the will of man and even higher beings, the devil and his angels, especially about the power to do evil, to sin, to ruin. The simple faith in the almighty God is lost to us.

It cannot be our concern to somehow reduce the creaturely ability below the measure of what is due to it according to the Scriptures. We may confidently reckon with the greatest, almost unmeasured possibilities, without having to fear that the measure of the power of the one to whom the Scriptures ascribe all power in heaven and on earth could ever be reached or even exceeded. There is no need for us to enter into lengthy arguments about the scope and limits of human or satanic capacity for evil. We allow its most powerful machinations in highest potency and most powerful

combination all conceivable scope, mindful of the single word of Scripture that where sin has become powerful, grace has become more overflowing.

But it cannot hurt under any circumstances if we let our view be clarified and sharpened by the firm, prophetic word of our God. Paul prays for the believers in Ephesus that they may know "which is the overwhelming effect of power upon us who believe, according to the working of the power of his might, which he made effective in Christ when he raised him up and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly regions, high above every principality, power, might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1, 19ff).

If someone should be inclined to object here that there is clearly a restrictive provision in the words "to us who believe," we would like to remind you that this restriction is only apparently such, since in verses 20 and 21 there can certainly be no question of Christ being exalted above every principality, authority, power and dominion only because of our faith. The objection is therefore invalid.

Also, every enlightened child of God knows that his faith is the work of God in him, not his own, nor that of another man or creature. It is God who works in us both, willing and accomplishing, according to His good pleasure. It is precisely in this that the greatness of divine power proves itself, that it can generate again in us creatures so deeply poisoned with unbelief and mistrust, with suspicion and doubt, the capacity for unconditional trust in God's word.

Another glorious word is spoken to us by the same apostle Eph. 3, 20, 21: "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly more than we ask or understand, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church which is in Christ Jesus, to all generations of eternity. Amen. Whatever we may have known and understood through faithful, thorough research in the Word of our God, of the depths and heights of the creaturely capacity for evil, as far as our insight may reach, He is able to do far more than we ask or understand.

Can there still be a question for a believing child of God whether the Son of God has the ability to cope completely and without residue with any of the horrible effects of the powers of sin, death and destruction?

It seems to us as if the honor of the glorious Lord is severely sinned against if we think of the mere possibility that there could not only be isolated cases (such as Judas), but whole masses, millions of lost creatures, whom the almighty Lord, whom God raised from the dead, could simply never be able to help.

It is certainly not the expressed opinion and intention of the dear servants of God, who think that there is such an impossibility for the Savior of the world, that this should somehow reflect on him. No, it is said again and again with the greatest emphasis that it is only the fault of the incorrigibly unbelieving and stubborn souls who did not want to.

But this completely overlooks the fact that the question of power here is exactly the same as the question of law. There we have had to recognize that under no circumstances can the conduct of any creature ever impair or render questionable the inalienable right of the Crucified and Risen One to all souls and beings. Here it must be emphasized and recognized with the same clarity that the divine all-saving ability can never be limited or abridged by any creaturely faculty, whether of will or ability.

It is by no means one of the rare occurrences of daily life that persistent suicides who have repeatedly laid hands on themselves have been effectively prevented by others from carrying out their murderous project. And Almighty God is not supposed to be able to save anyone without first asking him or her for permission? How have most of us been saved? How long did we fidget and struggle

senselessly when our almighty savior God had already stretched out his strong hand to us and seized us. There we may already appear a little more modest. Ezk. 16, 6: "I saw you lying in your blood and said to you: you shall live."

It is relatively easy to come to terms with the thought, which is nevertheless ghastly, that Christ would impose his blood right on innumerable, dearly bought creatures of his power and hand them over forever to ruin, simply because they did not want it. But for this one has apparently no understanding what it would mean for him that he as the Almighty then must declare himself as incapable to cope with such depths of evil will and satanic ability to corrupt and destroy.

And this in view of his own word to the Father: "Just as you have given him authority over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to all whom you have given him. What then is the meaning of authority, if it is later confronted with tasks that it cannot cope with, because the flesh has become more powerful than the Spirit of life, power, judgment and glory.

From these few considerations, which could be extended much further, it is clear enough that the generally adopted point of view in the evaluation of these serious questions is a wrong one. These things cannot be properly understood as long as we do not make our God and His Christ the starting point of all our faithful thinking and research in all circumstances. The great question is not what will become of all the lost men and angels, but what will become of the character, the nature, the attributes of our great Creator and Savior God?

This also gives this question a much more central importance for the whole Christian life of faith than most believers concede to it. One is ready to regard it as quite secondary and to treat it as a piece of private opinion, which one should not blame so much on one or the other brother, who has his love for it, provided that he keeps it quietly to himself.

If somewhere, then it comes here to the discharge and to the decision, what is my God and his whole unbroken word to me. There can be no question of a really omnipotent Savior, who can help a whole lost world completely right again - see, I make all things new - honestly, if this Savior faces the impossibility on his great day to help a completely enormous amount of his creatures bought by his blood out of the second death, into which he himself has thrown them with fullest consciousness and according to fullest justice.

One may try to calm oneself down by referring to the persistent unbelief and the self-inflicted hardness of heart, one may talk very strongly about the fact that God is not allowed to force anyone to salvation under any circumstances, we are free creatures - there always remains an unsolved residue of a very questionable restriction of the divine ability to cope with the very worst and most stubborn cases of creaturely destruction. It will always come down to this, even if one does not say it openly and freely: Yes, the Lord did not have such a hard time with us either, we believed sooner and easier, we were not so badly hardened as those.

Here again, for our thinking and imagination, the sure effectiveness of divine grace lies with us, in a less difficult nature of our being. We were also bad sinners, but not unattainable, incorrigible, hopeless, like those who did not want to be.

If Scripture calls us dead in our sins and transgressions, can there also be different degrees of being dead? Can one be even worse dead than simply dead? Is it not in each individual case merely a demonstration of the quite overwhelming greatness of His power that we have come out of death into life? Or was the greatness of his power at the deepest level dependent on the fact that our case was not as desperately evil as those who are just supposed to be irredeemably lost?

We are deeply convinced that upon careful examination it will turn out that we have been unconsciously playing tricks with our own thoughts and moods. We have become egocentric and measure

everything with the standard of personal experience and cognition. We have lost the simple faith and the unconditional trust in the almighty Savior God.

Not with so many clear words, but with all kinds of clauses and restrictions, we deny the power of the one to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given, to redeem and make true his clearly given word without any deduction, even to do far more than we can ask or understand.

It is all too easy to overlook the fact that the evil enemy must be particularly concerned with arousing and maintaining the highest possible opinion of his ability among us. He always tries to give himself an importance that does not belong to him at all.

According to the Scriptures, however, he is judged, put in the pillory by the cross of Golgotha, a triumph for the crucified, completely overcome and annihilated as the ruler over death. The word applies to the simplest child of God: Resist the devil, and he flees from you. The armor of our God, which we may wear and use, is impenetrable, indomitable, unfailingly effective.

It is one of the educational secrets of our God that the prince of this world is allowed to behave as if there had never been a complete defeat for him on Golgotha. But this must never determine us to believe in his power in that sense, that is, we must never harbor the concern as if there could ever be any other outcome of the mighty conflict between light and darkness, death and life, sin and grace, than the complete, unabridged victory of the Prince of Life over all the forces of death that may burst forth from the deepest depths of the creature's ruin. What we experience in the individual struggle and as a faithful fighting comradeship through faith is only a deposit and pledge for the final, unabridged victory of our glorious Head, the Duke of our blessedness, not only in the whole of mankind, but down to the deepest depths, where only prisoners of the strong lie and languish in bonds of death and ruin. They lie all together "caught in hope" in the "pit without water".

It is our privilege to trust our almighty Lord without looking. However, he has not made this easy for us. Our faith has to be proven, like the perishable gold in the fire. That is why all those powers may approach us to frighten us and put us to sharp tests. But he who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. He is and remains the victor.

But if we make our experience of his life forces in us the measure and standard of his ability, this does not do him honor. As delicious, valuable and faith-strengthening as our experiences may be, they can never describe or include what lies in him in terms of power and strength. Only his word may be valid for us, which is far beyond any possibility of experience.

For example, no child of God, no matter how faithful, can ever experientially determine what kind of renewing forces it will take until God will have taken the cover off the hearts of his entire people Israel, until he will have renewed them from the deepest bottom through the spirit of grace and prayer according to his promise. What an effort it will be when Israel's reacceptance and re-grafting will prove to be life from the dead! These are things that can and must simply be believed, that do not lie on the ground of our experiential life, however rich it may be. And so it is with the renewal of the whole lost world, with the restoration of all that God has spoken by the mouth of all holy prophets from the world (Acts 3:21).

And if one thinks about how difficult it was in our days until really converted, believing Christians stood up to believe once again in the mere rebirth of Israel as a people according to the writings of the prophets, then one understands a little better how much more difficult it is for believers to still believe above that, to believe childishly, simple-mindedly in the great thoughts of love of our glorious Savior God that encompass the whole created universe.

He has become so small to us that in our eyes our own bliss has taken up such an excessively large space. Thus, unnoticed and unintentionally, personal experience has become the ultimate measure of all divine things for us. From this we must be released. We must regain sight and understanding

of all that is written of Him in the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms. His interests, his clearly drawn goals must become ours, so we will reach the divine greatness.

B. The Exaltation of Christ Above All Heavens

1. Christ the image of the invisible God

With this meaningful name the Son of God is presented to us in Col. 1, 15, where Paul is about to give the most comprehensive explanation about the divine plan to reconcile the whole created universe to Himself through the blood of His cross. We will take the opportunity later to return to the rich content of this chapter. Here we want to be informed and accountable for the content of this designation of our Lord Jesus.

A rich parallel to this word is found in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the surpassing glory of the Son is set forth above the highest heavenly beings, the angels. Verse 3 says he is the radiance of his glory, the imprint of his being.

With this it is said that the conceivably highest, God Himself completely satisfying revelation of His invisible being succeeded in the one man Christ Jesus. The Father himself testifies to this to the Son at the Jordan, not only through the sending of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, but through the audible voice: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matth. 3, 17).

And the Son speaks from this consciousness to the disciple Philip Joh. 14, 9: He who sees me sees the Father. And in Mat. 11, 27: No one knows the Father except the Son and to whom the Son wills to reveal it.

This is what the Letter to the Hebrews means when it calls the Son the imprint of His being. From here it is also better understood why Jesus could say Joh. 17, 3 before his father: This is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and whom you have sent. And in the same wonderful prayer the Son declares once: I have made known to them your nameâ€™I have given them the glory that you have given me. For in the Son the Father has revealed and made glorious his name, his essence, since he is the reflection of his essence.

Comparisons are always instructive, especially those that are offered to us in the Word of God itself. There Paul says Rom. 1, 19, 20 a noteworthy word: Because that which is knowable is manifest among them, since God has revealed it to them; for His invisible being, His eternal power and Godhead, has been perceived in works by reflection since the creation of the world, so that the nations (without other revelation of God) have no excuse.

What interests us in these words here is not the reference to human beings and their responsibility in relation to the knowledge of God to be gained by reflection from the works of creation. Rather, it is the comparison, so obvious, between what is said there about the works of creation as a source of knowledge of the invisible being of God, and what the testimony about the Son that concerns us means when it calls him the image of the invisible God.

If this is the Son, and indeed as born of woman and appeared in the flesh, then this brings him uncommonly close to the whole of the rest of creation, insofar as the works of the invisible God which come forth in it are also to be regarded as equal to a revelation of his nature, his eternal power and divinity.

A similar comparison occurs to us in the 19th Psalm, since the singer refers in the first part to the heavens, which tell the glory of God, and to the feasts, which announce the work of his hands. Then, in the second part, he contrasts this with the much higher and more delicious revelation of the same Creator God in his word, his testimonies and commands, which refresh the soul, make the simple wise, gladden the heart and enlighten the eyes.

Later it is John who testifies of this word that it was in the beginning, was with God and was God, and that all things were created by the word that became, and that this word was made flesh and that it camped among us Joh. 1, 1-3. 14.

As great and enormous as the essential distance is between the word, through which the whole universe is created, and the creation called into existence by it and through it and to it, both the word of God and the whole creation have the great commonality that from them and through them the creator wants to be recognized. According to the testimony of the Son, this knowledge means nothing less than eternal life. Thus it may be said that not only the Son, the Word, through whom everything was created, but the whole created universe ultimately serves the same great goal, eternal life.

But what does the word of the image of the invisible God have to tell us? It immediately brings to mind what is written in the beginning at the creation of man about the plan and disposition of man: Let us make man in our image, in our likeness.... And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him (Gen. 1, 26. 27).

And how did God go about it? The scriptures also give us remarkable information about this: Then God Jehovah formed man, dust of the earth, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and so man became a living soul (Gen. 2:7).

But now the earth, from whose dust God took the material, had already come under the dominion of darkness. For it is written: The earth was desolate and empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep; but in God there is no darkness at all, so it must have had another origin. The scripture does not leave us in doubt about which origin. It knows only one originator of darkness, lies, death and destruction, the devil, the prince and God of this world course.

If God now takes from the dust of this death-decayed earth for the formation of man, who is to represent the image of his being, then lies in it the certain guarantee that God has reckoned from the outset in the whole disposition of man with existing death forces. These are included in a mysterious way, unfathomable to us, and are processed victoriously already in the first human form, which came forth well from the hand of the Creator. Thus man as the image of God already means in his original composition and disposition the expressed divine intention and the undoubted divine all-ability to become and to remain creatively master of all existing powers of death.

The fact that through seduction and fall these powers of death were later allowed to gain the upper hand in an extremely painful way and to make fallen man a slave of his lusts and a prey of death, however, again does not mean an abandonment, still less a failure of the divine intentions. It only means that God, for certain educational purposes and in view of the whole angelic world deeply interested in the fall and ruin of mankind, especially the one that had fallen away from him, whose head had given the seducer and corrupter of the human race, wanted to allow the forces of death and ruin the widest scope in mankind bearing his image, and to let them act out, as it would not have been possible on the ground of the rest of creation in such mightiness and variety of development.

Just such a pictorial, such immeasurable possibilities in itself holding generation, as the human world predisposed in its image gave the most excellent ground, on which the works of the devil could and should find their most horrible effect and formation, in order to be judged just there most effectively.

There are, a little reflection must tell us, atrocities, disgraces, cruelties, which by their nature are possible only in mankind, however much we are inclined to label such outbursts as diabolical. In reality, no devil could commit such, for the simple reason that he lacks the necessary corporeality, the organ for it.

The higher, finer, more capable of formation an organism is, the more horrible and deterrent the devastations which sin and corruption can cause in it. Therefore, if the sinfulness of sin, the abysmal hideousness of enmity against God should come to its most perfect representation, then this was nowhere better possible than in human nature taken from the dust of the earth.

Thus it was and is until today the most suitable playground for the most blatant spawns of sinful urges, destructive and devastating powers of destruction and dark forces. If these should be finally judged, then it could happen nowhere more thoroughly and more effectively, than in the bosom of mankind. And this has happened according to God's well-considered advice and will.

And among all who are born of woman, never one has aroused and challenged hatred, enmity, malice, falsehood, meanness against himself in a more effective way than the Son of man who came from heaven. And precisely in this lies his deepest proof as the real and true Son of God, as the reflection of his glory, the consummate expression of his nature, that he has set against himself the powers of darkness in the heavenly, earthly and subterranean regions as no other has ever done. And in doing so, he judged them forever, put them in the pillory and made a public triumph out of them (Col. 2:15).

Thus was fulfilled what John later testifies about him: For this purpose the Son of God appeared, that he might destroy the works of the devil (1. Joh.3, 8).

As certainly as according to the Scriptures the first Adam was created in the image and likeness of God, but through diabolical seduction did not exist in truth, so certainly through the Word of God made flesh the original irrevocable intention of the Creator has been brought to the highest perfection in the fullest extent. Therefore Christ is also called in the scriptures the second and therefore the last Adam. For there is no room, no cause nor need for a third.

That Christ became this only by exposing himself to the full force of satanic powers and finally overcoming them by suffering and dying is testified to by the whole of Scripture. He did not conquer the evil powers of darkness as the innocent, holy and pure from his mother's womb, but only as the crucified and risen from the dead, who by his death destroyed the power of death when he tasted death for everyone by the grace of God.

This is probably also what Paul means when he testifies about Him in Rom. 1, 4 that He was proven to be the Son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness through the resurrection from the dead.

Thus, in Christ, God has achieved his intention already expressed at the original creation of man to his own fullest satisfaction. In his Christ a completely new humanity in the image of God is guaranteed to him, as it is written in Rom. 5, 18: As by one transgression against all men was unto condemnation, even so by one righteousness against all men was justification of life. For death is the wages of sin, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

But as certainly as his likeness to God was first shown in Jesus through the resurrection from the dead, there can and will be no other way for the whole of the rest of mankind to reach the full attainment of the great divine goal. Therefore, not only in Adam all had to die, but in Christ all must come to life.

How else should the living God, as the original source and ground of all life, be able to find his full image in mankind, if it is not placed in the whole fullness of life through Christ and is permeated by it through resurrection like him. Therefore Christ is not only called the firstborn among many brothers, but also the firstborn from the dead.

This establishes two things: first, that the Christ is the head and firstling, the beginning and guarantee of a family of true sons in the image of God, partakers of the divine nature; and second, that his

resurrection is like the breaking through of the womb of the heavenly Jerusalem, which is our mother, so that the way is now open by which innumerable children shall be born to God, as it is written, Of Zion it shall be said, Every man is born in her, and the Most High shall establish her! Jehovah shall enumerate in the description of the nations: This is born there! And they will sing and play: All my springs are in you (Ps. 87, 5-7)!

A womb that can never die, wither, slacken or fail; for life has appeared and death has been swallowed up in victory. Now there is neither a goal nor a barrier for the possibilities of the renewal of a whole human world consecrated to death and destruction. For as sin reigned in death, so grace shall reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21).

2. Christ the firstborn of all creation

With this designation of our Lord, which we find in the immediate wake and inner connection with that just considered of the "image of the invisible God," the Holy Spirit draws the circle of His central and salvific relations still significantly wider.

This word of the image of God goes unmistakably into the frame of the created human world, this of the firstborn of all creatures goes up to the outermost borders of all created beings and worlds. For as great and significant as humanity in Christ is in the plan of God with His universe, the rich, high and deep thoughts of our God are by no means exhausted in it.

Unmistakably, the Holy Scripture itself establishes differences between different classes and levels, beings and creatures in the universe. Hebr. 1, 5 it says: To what angel did God ever say: you are my Son, today I have begotten you? And, He (the Son) has become so much more powerful than the angels, as the name he has inherited distinguishes him from them (v. 4). Distinguishing and distinguishing, however, are synonymous with excluding or setting apart.

In the prayer Eph. 3, 15 the apostle addresses the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as the "right Father over every family in heaven and on earth". In the OT the angels are also called "sons of God". And in the book of Job not even Satan is excluded from this high designation (Job 1:6; 2:1).

This is most obvious in the explanatory words that immediately follow the description "the firstborn of all creatures" in Col. 1, 16: For - and with this something is always explained or substantiated - in him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth..... all things were created through him and for him, and he is before all things and all things consist in him.

There it is clearly before our eyes that with that name not only the great human world alone is referred to, however central its position in the divine household may be, but the divine household comprises the entire creation of intelligent beings, of whatever nature and disposition they may be.

It is of great importance that we, as redeemed from humanity, as called to the community of the Son of His love, allow ourselves to look at this and let it widen, especially since in the nature of things the word of divine revelation given to us is primarily addressed to us human beings, deals with us human beings and aims at the redemption and perfection of a humanity in the image of God.

The only begotten Son of God did not become an angel but a man and was invented as a man. But whoever wanted to conclude from this that the divine revelation and the divine counsels for salvation and restoration that lie behind it and are active in it served exclusively the human race, would be guilty of an alarming misjudgment.

A brief survey of the hints contained in Scripture itself concerning the high interest of the angelic world in the destinies and aims of mankind on earth will suffice to make this clear to us.

It hardly suffers a serious doubt that our globe was in former eons the dwelling-place of a great part of the angels, especially of him who is still known today as the Prince and God of this world.

From the dust of this former dwelling of fallen angels, by whose fall it came under the regiment of darkness, is taken the material for the formation of man in the image of God.

According to Scripture, the course and historical development of world affairs are subject to the influences and machinations of the powers of darkness, which are also counteracted by good angels (Dan. 10; Eph. 2:2; 6:12).

Israel received the law through angelic ministry. On all significant occasions in the development of the messianic kingship on earth, angels appear as messengers, as witnesses, as mediators, as agents, always as beings deeply engaged in it.

The life of the Lord Jesus is immensely rich in examples of this. He has to be tempted by the devil in the desert and is then served by angels. From his betrayer Satan himself takes possession and appears as the actual guiding spirit in the whole gruesome story of his rejection. In Gethsemane, an angel strengthens the struggling Lord. At his empty tomb they appear as honorary guards and first messengers of God's deed to the wailing women and the despondent disciples. A later writing reports of them that they desire with great desire to see into the mystery of the gospel.

Paul speaks of an instruction that heavenly principalities and powers receive from the church about the manifold wisdom of God Eph. 3, 10. And 1 Tim. 3, 16 says: justified in the spirit, appeared to the angels and preached among the nations.

And if one wanted to delete from Revelation everything that is said there about the share of the angels in the development of the great final goals of our God in judgment and grace, then gaps would arise that would make it very clear to us how short-sighted a view of the divine plan of salvation and kingdom is that does not take due account of his thoughts with the entire angelic world.

It seems to us that it would not be far wrong to warn the believing church not to take the role of the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son towards the lost world of angels.

In any case, we have here before us a biblical designation of our glorious Lord, which gives us every reason to carefully pursue and ponder what is pronounced in it, if He is the firstborn of all creatures.

It is not advisable that we emphasize here in great detail everything that is understood in this one word. However, the leading thought of the firstborn should still occupy us a little, because it recurs frequently in the Scriptures and is therefore most likely to be understood by us.

The statements of the Scriptures following this expression are such that they cut off the water from the outset from a questionable attempt to push our Lord down to the same creaturely level with all creatures (as happens in the so-called millennium doctrine), when they say that in him everything is created that is created, visible and invisible. Thus, he is and remains separated from all creatures by a gap that can never be bridged, as far as his majesty, divine nature and creative dignity are concerned.

At the same time, however, the very fact that everything was created through him and for him, makes him responsible for this creature in all its divisions in a most essential sense. Because it concerns there obligations which are in no way conditioned by the moral behavior of the creature, but which are based only on the fact that just everything was called by him and to him into existence.

But the expression also contains a completely different basic and leading idea. This soon becomes clear from the consideration of the two other occurrences of this title with our Lord that we are familiar with. Only three verses further in Col. 1 we find the "firstborn from the dead". And Rom. 8, 29 we find the firstborn among many brethren. In both cases we are undoubtedly not standing on natural ground, on that of the old creation into which death has penetrated, but on resurrection ground. In the case of the former, no further proof is needed. And in the case of the other, it is likewise self-evident for everyone who is born of the spirit that there can be talk of a brotherhood

with the exalted Lord only where one knows himself crucified together with him and raised to a newness of life.

This gives us the sure and infallible key for the correct interpretation of the present word of the firstborn of all creatures. This is not contradicted by the fact that in the following verses the reference is made to the fact that all creatures in heaven and on earth owe their creaturely existence also on the ground of the old creation, which was struck by death, to him, in whom, through whom and to whom it exists. The word of the firstborn already prophetically reaches over to the thought, which will be emphasized in detail in the following, of the firstborn from the dead, which dominates the whole.

But if the resurrected one as such is the firstborn of all creatures, then the way is shown, on which all creatures can return to him and finally be led towards their original purpose in him.

Then in him, the risen one, the sure guarantee is given that all death being from all creature will be victoriously eliminated and put to death, as certainly this has become true of him and his genuinely human nature and corporeality, as it is written: I was dead, and behold, I am alive forever and ever, having the keys of Hades and of death (Rev. 1:18).

For this is the basic meaning of the expression "the firstborn," that with him the way was opened on which all subsequent births to the light can and should take place. Accordingly, Jehovah claims in Israel that everything that first breaks the mother among men and cattle is sanctified to Him.

And on this sanctification is based the priestly dignity linked to the firstborn, as was illustrated to the people of Israel by the Levitical priesthood, which indeed took the place of all the firstborn in the whole nation.

And indissolubly connected with this is the task of the firstborn to intervene in a releasing and liberating way for any indebted member of the family who has fallen into bondage, the right and duty of restoration according to his ability.

Only then will we do full justice to this biblical designation if we allow it to mean all that follows from Scripture concerning the position of the firstborn. For Scripture cannot be broken even in this. In the choice of its expressions it wants to be treated as its own commentary. We never go wrong in submitting to this divine fundamental law of all sober and reliable interpretation of Scripture. Scripture does not mint gold coins in order to refuse to accept them at full face value afterwards.

Thus, in the single word of the firstborn of all creation lies a sufficient, all-embracing guarantee that God will come to this wonderfully high and glorious goal with all mankind to be transfigured into his image. But also Christ will no less infallibly lead all creatures in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, thrones, principalities, dominions, powers to their original, God-ordained destiny, reconcile them to God in the most complete way, namely on the way of the raising from the dead, the complete elimination of all death being from the whole creation.

3. the great waiting time

It is essential for a clear understanding of the questions that concern us here that we have a proper insight into the divine order of the ages as they have succeeded each other in a regulated sequence for unmeasured millennia. These, like everything else, were created by the Son and for the Son (Heb. 1:2; 11:3).

These are not accidental and incidental circumstances in the history of divine activity. They form the carefully and deliberately measured framework within which the manifold thoughts and goals of our God in Christ Jesus are gradually carried out.

They are all naturally in a vital spiritual and organic connection with each other. They do not only flow chronologically one out of the other or into the other, but each preceding age was and is the preparation of the following one, until they will all flow like the streams of the earth into the great sea of the world, into what the Scriptures call the consummation of the ages (*pleromatos ton kairon Eph. 1, 10*). As a final result, the summary of all that is in heaven and on earth under one head, Christ, is clearly written in this passage.

Towards this great world-embracing goal strive all events, which have extended and spread over the different ages for thousands of years. No matter how many and what kind of creatures have been involved in what we call history, the supreme and absolute direction of the whole has been and is totally in the hands of the One who directs all things according to the counsel of His will.

It is one of the most delicious realizations that we get a clearer and clearer sense, a more and more sure mind for this great, silent, sure, purposeful working of the great God and world leader.

Of course, no matter how intensive but limited our preoccupation with our personal interests, even the highest ones, can give us that. Whoever restricts himself in his view of the world and of history to the things that concern himself and the shaping of his personal salvation, misses the goal that the order of the revelation of the Scriptures sets for us and makes attainable.

It is important for us not only to get a broad and comprehensive overview of the whole course of the ages so far, but also to become clear about the special meaning and task of the future, most of all the present eon, which is dedicated to the gathering and preparation of the congregation of the living God called and chosen from all peoples. It is self-evident that besides this one great main goal of the divine activity there are other subordinate and secondary goals.

For example, it is quite unmistakable that our age, in which through the gospel of saving grace the one holy community of believers is gathered from all peoples, tongues, and languages, must at the same time serve the execution of one of the most terrible judgments ever passed upon a people, the judgment of the temporary hardening of Israel, through whose utter failure salvation has come to us Gentiles, bringing us into personal fellowship of life and glory with the Christ Himself.

These are fundamental insights that are indispensable for a proper understanding of God's thoughts with His chosen people Israel according to the flesh in contrast to the congregation from the nations called with a heavenly call, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, neither male nor female, but a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Now, according to the New Testament revelation, the present eon also bears this very peculiar characteristic that it justifiably means a great, parenthetic, i.e. switched on, waiting time not only for the risen Lord in heaven, but also for his whole dearly bought community on earth and, besides that, for his people Israel. Waiting time means.

Israel as a people must therefore wait in the whole of the present age under terrible sorrow in dreadful desolation and hardening in the utter darkness until God awakens the gracious word for them, which He spoke to the whole house of Judah and the whole house of Israel, as it is written Rom. 11:25: "Part hardening has happened to Israel until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.

According to the Scriptures, however, this extended period of waiting is not a hopeless one, although Israel itself has no view of the great, glorious things prophesied to it for the time of the end, however clearly they are written in the Scriptures.

We should not be too surprised about this, since it is obvious how many enlightened, undoubtedly born-again Christians from the nations also have no or very little understanding of these things.

That the character of the believing church during this whole eon is also that of those who are waiting is clear for every true convert from 1 Thess. 1, 10: As you have been converted to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to expect His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, who saves us from the wrath to come. Phil. 3, 20: Our citizenship is in heaven, from where we also expect the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.

In such waiting the believing church knows itself to be one with its Lord and Head in a wonderful way, who, with all the former glory that the Father restored to Him according to Joh. 17, 5, is nevertheless, according to the good pleasure of His Father, in a very definite way a waiting person according to Hebr. 10, 12.13: "But this man, after he has offered one sacrifice for sins, has sat down at the right hand of God forever and waits from now on until all His enemies are laid at the footstool of His feet.

This is also in line with the remark of the apostle Hebr. 2, 8 made by the Spirit: But now we see that not everything is yet subject to him.

Also in 1 Cor. 15, 23. 24 Paul speaks of the resurrection of those who belong to Christ at His coming and then he postpones the actual end much further, to the time when He will hand over the Messianic kingdom, the object of all Old Testament promises, to His Father, after He will have done away with - because now no longer necessary - every rule, authority and power.

From this single word already it can be seen that even with and at his soon return the Son of God will by no means come into possession of all that God has spoken of through the mouth of all his holy prophets from the world.

His return means for him according to these and other promises first the complete, organic connection in glory with his today waiting for his future and loving church. According to this side, his future brings a conclusion for him and for them. He is then at the goal with his "fullness", as the community is called.

With it, however, neither for him nor for them a goal is set for all believing and hoping waiting. Rather, only a new beginning has become possible for further, great goals striving governmental and administrative activity in judgment and grace through the then only completed Christ of God in His wonderful completion and unity decided from the eternities 1.Cor. 12, 12.13.

And if it is justified to apply the word Eph. 1, 7 here, then there are still a number of ages ahead of the Lord and His church glorified with Him from there, in which He will show the abundant riches of His grace in kindness toward us, who now believe in Him and expect Him from heaven.

As we may well assume, the primeval creation Gen.1,1 lies unmeasured eons behind the first intrusion of evil into creation by the fall of Satan.

Between this and the creation of the human being and his fall under the satanic temptation also again eons may have passed, because it is not to be assumed that God did not leave extensive space to the angel world to decide for or against God. The evil and its head may have had a long, content-heavy history behind itself before it came to its run-up against the first human pair.

For the preparation of fallen humankind for the first advent of the promised woman's seed, God used four thousand years, as we know exactly.

Since his rejection by his own people two millennia have already passed. The positive content of this present waiting time is primarily the gathering and preparation of the community of believers from all nations, Jews as well as Gentiles.

With this, their firstling character is irrefutably pronounced, that is, the yield of the present age is again nothing else than the preparation of material, of organs, which will come to the appropriate use only in still future eons.

The conclusion of this age can under no circumstances mean more for the community than the opening of a completely new, incalculable abundance of possibilities of proof, of activities in the most magnificent style in the course of still future eons. For it would be an undue reflection on the divine wisdom, if one wanted to assume that with the end of the present course of the world the end of the world would have come at all.

Rather, according to the testimony of Scripture, it is a matter of an essentially new phase of the great world events in heaven and on earth and under the earth, which is signaled by the second coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven. It is not divine, not biblically thought, if one makes nothing else out of the future of the Lord Jesus, as it unfortunately mostly happens, than a great act of judgment, by which the final fate of all creatures would be settled within very short periods with a few decisive sayings from his mouth.

The scripture clearly calls the present eon "last time" (1. Joh. 2, 18). But one would put the scripture against the scripture, if one wanted to take the word literally, so that after this aeon no more aeon would be to be expected at all. Against this Eph. 2, 7 would speak a clear language.

Likewise the numerous cases in which a plurality of eternities, of eons is spoken of Eph. 3, 21. The expression "last time" can only have a relative meaning, "last" in view of a great turning point to which the previous eons pointed and with which a completely new time, a new order of eons will begin.

It is the last time in view of the great central act of God, when he will send again the one who until now has taken the heavens, seated himself at the right hand of God, until all his enemies are laid at the footstool of his feet.

It is the last time also in view of the peculiar development of the godless nature, which develops more and more parallel to the existence of the community of God. Counter-Christianity can only exist as long as true Christ-life is present in a community of called saints and chosen ones. Accordingly, John testifies about the many counter-Christians already of the apostolic time: they went out from us and yet were not (in divine essence) from us.

In the future eon, in which Satan will be bound so that he can no longer deceive the nations, evil will certainly not yet be eliminated and powerful enough in mankind, but Satan will then obviously no longer bring it to a man of sin.

Thus one understands then also better why the whole present time as last time means a large waiting time. Waiting is not in the sense of idly letting things happen, but rather the effectiveness of the Holy Spirit has probably never been more intensive and comprehensive in any previous age than in the present one. My Father works, and I also work.

But God is holding back with a definitely in prospect, long prepared and predicted revelation of the royal and judicial glory of the Son. The Son holds back with the manifestation of His true dignity, majesty and majesty and puts up with still being misjudged, despised and hated in His own by the world that is in trouble.

And the Holy Spirit, who is after all a Spirit of power and glory, confines Himself to working and cultivating in believers the life of the Risen One as a hidden one, not understood by the world, without transforming their mortal corporeality into the likeness and conformity of the body of His glory.

The sons of God may be challenged by the enemy, ridiculed, handed over to the world for hatred and persecution. Corrupting powers, hypocrisy, sham and dishonesty are allowed to creep into the household of faith, the historical existence of God's church may be questioned again and again.

The gospel may be falsified, watered down, decomposed, nullified by the statutes of men, buried by traditional heaps of rubble, attacked with fire and sword, with sharp, corrosive criticism, torn to shreds and thrown to the dogs, in short, it is exposed to all conceivable hostile and damaging influences in apparent helplessness, with renunciation of authoritative, scientific or philosophical protection or defense. What there is in the world of men and spirits in the way of refined malice, deceit, lies, abuse and blasphemy, is allowed to cool its heels at God's revelation in the word, at Christ's church, his body.

All these are unmistakable signs of the indescribable patience and long-suffering of our great Savior God. It also shows that this is really the last time, that is, that with the present eon the last preparatory steps of God for the forthcoming revelation of his Son from heaven and the final tackling of the tremendous, world-encompassing redemption tasks set for him will have been done, so that now the time for judgment, for the decisive solution of the great world and kingdom problems has come.

At the same time, this long waiting period offers us a good guarantee that the final result will certainly correspond to what is to be expected according to the promises given. What goes around comes around, applies here as well. After all, we are not dealing with mere measures of force, which could be completed in a relatively short time, but with the moral maturity of both good and evil in the world of men and angels.

4. training and completion of future court executors

a) Israel for the peoples of the earth

We recognized from the previous section how the present world time serves a double, salvation-economic purpose of our God. While this is unmistakably a time of the most wonderful search for grace for the poor world of nations, which is far away from God, it was and is at the same time just as unmistakably the time of the most terrible judgment that can ever come over a people, the judgment of hardening, of being cast out into the outer darkness for Israel (Rom. 11, 7- 11. 25).

But now the apostle, who speaks very clearly of the hardening of his people, asks: Did they stumble because of this, that they should fall? Do God's ways of punishment and judgment exhaust themselves in this shattering judgment of blindness? Do God's ways with his chosen people end in their final rejection? And he answers decisively in the spirit of prophecy: Let that be far off! Thereupon he opens the most wonderful perspective that out of Israel's temporary rejection for the rest of the world of nations a completely undreamt-of, great salvation revelation of God has dawned and become possible.

But in these explanations, which are immensely rich, it is by no means exhausted what he has to say about the procedure of God in the judgment with his people. He directs our gaze far out into a time that lies beyond the present aeon and in which there is a manifest shift in the roles or places of Israel and the Christianized world of nations. He holds out the prospect that this now so highly pardoned world of nations will not remain in the goodness of God either, that it will fall under quite similar judgment as Israel is affected today v. 21. 22.

But this is not yet the end of God's ways to salvation with the whole humanity. This is clearly evident from the hint that God can and will graft Israel, which has broken out today and is lying there barren and unfruitful, into the tree again, and that this is much more plausible and probable than the

unnatural grafting of wild Gentile branches into the good olive tree of divine planting, which is valid for this eon (v. 24).

This re-grafting of Israel into its own olive tree, i.e. the divine tree of revelation from which all salvation for the whole world shall and will blossom - for salvation comes from the Jews - is not exhausted in Israel's pardon for its own salvation and blessing. Rather, the apostle's whole argument rests on the unshakable ground: God's gifts and calling cannot repent him, they are irrevocable (v. 29).

Israel is and remains for all coming times the people of divine choice, the chosen vessel and instrument of blessing and salvation for the whole world of nations. This is evident from the single word: If their fall was the wealth of the world and their loss the wealth of the nations, how much more their full number. So it will mean much more blessing and wealth for the world of nations if not a mere remnant but the whole full number of the people come into the hand of God, to him a useful vessel of blessing for the nations of the earth. "It shall come to pass, as ye have been a curse among the Gentiles, O house of Israel and house of Judah, so will I save you, that ye shall be a blessing" (Zech. 8:13).

The most significant and substantial word about this is spoken by Paul in Rom. 11, 15: If their rejection of the world means reconciliation, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead. In this single word we are given a sure key for understanding the wonderful thoughts of God. He does not only make blossom out of Israel's shattering fall an indescribable salvation of sonship for the distant ones. He transforms the complete death of his chosen people into a source of unimagined fullness of life for them and for the world of nations.

For it is written of Abraham: Therefore from one body, even from one body that died, children sprang up like the stars of heaven in multitude, like the sand on the edge of the sea, which cannot be numbered (Heb. 11:12).

These words contain and reveal in great clarity the great basic law of the divine action to let first his chosen die before he lets arise from his death immortal life in immeasurable extent. And what is true of the Father of all believers will be no less true of the people whose gifts of grace and calling God has never withdrawn nor will ever withdraw. Rather, what has already become true of their father Abraham and will still become a constant reality will be realized in them on a national scale.

From this it follows clearly that the present state of judgment of the chosen people is nothing else than the God-willed, thorough preparation for later demonstrations of divine life forces, not only in them, but through them on the whole world of nations. For Israel is my firstborn son, that is the end of it.

Therefore, all of the in themselves terrifying and for our natural sensibility almost unbearable manifestations of spiritual and moral misery, of the most horrible remoteness from God, are nothing else than premeditated death effects, by which on the one hand the whole shattering seriousness and severity of the divine judgment is to be recognized (Rom. 11, 22); on the other hand, they are the best guarantee that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will let forces of imperishable life flow out of such depths of the judgment of death with all the more overwhelming power when His time of visitation has come.

In Hosea 6:1,2 it is written: Come, let us return to the Lord! He has torn us, he will also heal us; he has wounded, he will also bind us up. After two days he will make us alive again, on the third day he will raise us up to live before him.

This is how the prophet Ezekiel saw the end of the dry bones of the whole house of Israel. To the question addressed to him in view of such death: Son of man, do you think that these bones will

come to life again? the divine seer does not know how to answer better than: You know it, Lord! And in this he had hit it.

God knew and knows it well, but did not keep it to himself, but showed him and us with the greatest clarity what he intends to do with these dead bones of his people: "Behold, I will open your graves and bring you out of your graves as my people and bring you again into the land of Israel....I will also put my spirit within you, and you shall live; and I will bring you again into your land, that you may know that I am Jehovah, who I say and will do (chap. 37:1-14).

Now it belonged to the original calling of Israel as a people to execute the holy judgment of God on the tribes of the Canaanites appointed by God for this purpose. This is already indicated by Jehovah's word to Abraham: the measure of the sins of the Amorites is not yet full (Genesis 15:16).

The liberation of the enslaved people from Egypt, from the house of service, did not take place in any other way than through terrible judgments, which Moses had to summon up at Jehovah's command over Pharaoh, over his land and people. These judgments gave the redeemed people a foretaste of the fact that they would continue to be the executors of divine judgment and extermination in the world of nations, who had settled on the soil of the Promised Land and polluted the land of Jehovah with their nameless abominations.

The commands issued to Joshua and the elders of Israel for this purpose leave nothing to be desired in terms of definiteness. They could not be misunderstood and were not. This is testified by the Gibeonites themselves, who had evaded extermination by a ruse. In answer to Joshua's question, they said, "It has been declared to your servants for certain that the Lord your God commanded Moses his servant to give you all the land and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you (Jos. 9:22-24).

Most of the difficulties encountered by the people of Israel in the Promised Land arose from their disobedience precisely to this clear commandment of the complete eradication with stump and stick of all those horribly contaminated Canaanite tribes of peoples, by whom they themselves were then infected and seduced into the most atrocious idolatry on all the mountains and high hills. The misunderstood sparing was to them and thus to the rest of mankind a terrible ruin, by which their own moral and religious development and that of all mankind was set back many millennia. It would have been a mercy if Israel had then unsparingly carried out with punctual fidelity the judgment of extermination entrusted by Jehovah to their hands.

It shows a deep, fundamental misunderstanding of today's theology and way of preaching, tainted by false humanity, when one speaks with a certain disgust and with great contempt of the "bloodthirsty Jehovah" of the Jews, and is downright annoyed by the Psalms, in which God's vengeance is evoked against the incorrigible enemies of God and His people.

One cannot and may not understand that this Jehovah of the OT is no other than the Jesus of the NT. There one will still have to relearn significantly when once the great day of God's fierce wrath will dawn and he will judge the nations in justice and judgment, when he will smash them like pottery vessels and feed them with a rod of iron.

One has fantasized a sweet, almost feminine Savior, who by no means could ever become angry and not touch a hair on anyone's head, for whom there is no question of fiery anger and who is much too good to throw anyone into the hellish fire.

The love of God would then be pure sentimentality and flabby sensibility, instead of a consuming fire that burns to the lowest bottom of hell, according to the Scriptures, precisely because it is holy, unsparing love that cannot tolerate evil in any creature under any circumstances, but pursues it with fiery zeal, exterminates and eliminates it.

We may cherish the good confidence that in the world age to come, after Israel has emerged from its own appalling judgment purified and clarified, it will then carry out its proper calling as God's judicial executor on the nations of the earth with a different faithfulness and thoroughness than it did then. Then there will be no more lamentation: They did not exterminate the nations of which the Lord had told them, but they got involved with the heathen and learned their ways....they sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons, and they shed innocent blood... and so the land was desecrated by blood debts (Ps. 106, 34 - 38).

That great basic law of all divine activity will also come into its own, that all original intentions of God will not be carried out the first time, but certainly the second time.

But about the divine destiny on this line no honest doubt can remain for the one who lets the scripture count as divine according to its whole extent. Thus we read already in Ps. 149, 5-9: The (of course Old Testament) pious shall rejoice with glory, they shall exult on their camps. Let the praise of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, that they may execute vengeance on the peoples, punishment on the nations; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron, that they may execute on them the judgment written; this is a glory to all his pious ones. Hallelujah!

Isaiah speaks just as clearly in 41:15, 16: Do not be dismayed, O worm of Jacob, O little Israel; for I have helped you, says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. Behold, I have made thee a new sharp threshing sledge; thou shalt thresh and crush mountains, and make hills chaff; thou shalt winnow them, that the wind may carry them away, and the storm scatter them. But you will delight in the LORD and boast in the Holy One of Israel.

And again the Lord speaks through Zechariah: "In that day I will make the princes of Judah like a fiery furnace among sticks, and like a burning torch among sheaves, and they shall consume on the right hand and on the left all the nations round about; but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her old place (12:6). In Isaiah as well as in Zechariah the context makes it clear that these are words that were spoken for the last time, which are still waiting for their fulfillment.

In view of such words now the question rises: How then do such terrible judgments of punishment, which Israel is to exercise upon the nations of the future eon, rhyme with the quite undoubted promises, recurring in great number and abundance, that Israel is to be a blessing, as she was before a curse to the nations ? Can these two things be reconciled ? Can both coexist without internal contradiction ?

According to the prevailing church opinion and conception, however, not. This must be immediately obvious to every thinking Christian. Because there it is taught that with death everything is over, and who does not seize the offered grace of God in this life, for him there is now and never a possibility of salvation.

But if we now take the apostolic word from Rom. 11, 21. 22, i.e. If we consider that just the present Christianized peoples, who despite all Christianization still remain in their innate hostility to God and alienation from God and have not accepted the love of truth and have not become obedient to the salvific teaching from the heart, that it is they who will come into the judgment that will be exercised on them by the Israel of the future, then only the full scope of such ways of judgment announced by the word of God comes to us.

There happens what we have just indicated of a shift of roles between the nations and the people of divine election.

Today, before the eyes of the nations, God's severe, unbending judgment is being carried out on His people, and the nations of Christendom are, in the hands of God, the rods with which Israel's neck is bloodily whipped.

They are the main reason that Israel's eyes remain shut, so that they do not recognize the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, their own bodily brother.

Today, the greatest obstacle for the Jew on the path of faith in salvation in Christ - is Christianity.

It must be noted, however, that God did not give the nations of Christendom any mandate or authority to cool their heels against His people, as they did and still do on their own initiative. But it goes, as already Zechariah complains: I was only a little angry, but they helped to ruin (1. 15).

The judgment of retribution will strike them all the more forcefully when the roles are reversed, when Israel will again be accepted in grace, blessed and inhabited by Jehovah, and when it will be fulfilled in the proud nations what is written Jer. 30:6: All that devour thee shall be devoured, and all thine enemies shall be led captive; all that plunder thee shall be spoiled, and all that rob thee will I make a spoil.

In Is. 60, 12. 14 the Lord says: "For the people or kingdom that will not serve you shall perish, and the nations shall be utterly destroyed.... the sons of your oppressors will come bowing down to you, and all those who have reviled you will fall at your feet.

To anyone familiar with the history of Israel in the present eon, it is obvious at first glance that it was precisely the Christianized peoples of the earth among whom God scattered Israel, that they were allowed to experience constantly what God did to the nations, and those, conversely, witnessed the terribly serious judgment that God executed before their eyes on His beloved people.

Thus it is clear beyond any doubt that we have to think first of all of the peoples of today's Christendom when we speak of these executions of punishment by Israel.

This is such an unusual thought for the great, secure Christianity of the nations that one can well understand that one will not easily agree to the same.

But it was the same with Israel at that time. They thought themselves so high above the Gentiles that it would not occur to them from afar that God would have their temple destroyed by the Gentiles, the holy city razed to the ground and all his people cast out into the utter darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

They did not suspect, because they did not want it to be true, that the prophecy of the Nazarene should be literally fulfilled, which he pronounced in the parable: He will come and kill these husbandmen and give the vineyard to others (Luk 20, 16). And Matth. 22, 7: But when the king heard these things, he was angry and sent out his armies and killed these murderers and set their city on fire.

And yet this is what happened. Why should God spare these nations, to whom he not only gave his clear word, but also the most impressive visual lesson in judged Israel, how he intends to fulfill his word that he spoke?

But now, where is the promised blessing that is to come from this restored and pardoned Israel to the whole world of nations? The answer is quite obvious.

As certainly as the deep and terrible ways of judgment, which God has gone with his chosen people, only mean salvation and blessing for them and have never had any other purpose than to prepare them for the future reception of abundant grace through crushing judgment, likewise, for the final recovery of the nations, which in their arrogance, like Israel, have withdrawn from the salvation of God in Christ and have considered themselves unworthy of eternal life, there is no other way to come to their senses than that of relentless crushing and surrender into the lowest hell of the divine fire of wrath.

If we only keep simple-mindedly to the clear basic lines which God Himself has drawn in His Word, then we will not go wrong. He himself said: Israel is my firstborn son among the nations. This means that there can be no other way for all other sons in the great family of nations to be born again, to break through into complete renewal according to God's will, than through unsparing judgment and damnation. For God is not only the God of the Jews, but also of the Gentiles.

Thus, the execution of the most severe judgment of the almighty holy God, which Israel will carry out with utmost faithfulness when the time comes, will prove to be the greatest blessing for the nations concerned that they could share. Israel's path leads back to God only through death. And so their acceptance will mean nothing else for the whole world of nations than life from the dead.

But a doctrine that sees nothing behind the terrible judgment but an infinite continuation of death and damnation judges itself, because it reinterprets the clearest and simplest lines of divine action in judgment and grace and turns them into their opposite.

For, according to their account, not grace but endless sin remains last on the scene, and all judgment is completely without result for the attainment of the expressed and true thoughts and purposes of God, who wants all to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Then Paul would have to be corrected to read: But where grace would have gladly reigned, sin has proved infinitely more powerful for the thorough thwarting of the supreme purposes of Almighty God!

b) His body, the church, for the angelic world

Is it also justified, some readers will certainly ask, to ascribe to the congregation of believers for the coming world times a task in the heavenly realm on the fallen angelic world, which corresponds to that which Israel is called to exercise on the earthly peoples? Is this not a mere inference to set a parallel between Israel and Gemeine, between earthly and heavenly bodies? And if it were, the last mentioned word from 1 Corinthians 15, where such a comparison of earthly and heavenly bodies is made by the apostle himself, should give every serious Bible researcher food for thought. So there must be something to it, otherwise his language would hardly be justifiable. For it surely goes beyond what could be called mere imagery or symbolism. His conclusion: So it will be also with the resurrection of the dead - makes everything clear.

Besides, the New Testament contains a not insignificant number of words in which it is pointed out with great clarity that what happened to those people had an exemplary meaning for us and, as far as those events still carry unexhausted prophetic content, they will have the same meaning also for the future.

In the whole theological treatment of the prophetic part of the Scriptures, one has not been at all reticent with the procedure according to which everything that God has promised, above all good and beautiful things, for his Israel, is without further ado transferred to the present-day community.

And while this has led to a very unfortunate misuse of Scripture, and has created great obscurity and confusion, it may be admitted that these two great bodies in the divine household, Israel and the commonwealth, can only be rightly understood by allowing both what distinguishes them and what they have in common to come into its own.

But the matter is by no means in such a way that we would have to depend only on parallels and comparisons for its correct understanding, which nevertheless have their doctrinal meaning. Rather, the NT contains an abundance of direct instruction of this mighty heavenly calling of the congregation of this course of time for the near future and for the solution of the great final tasks of their glorious Lord and Head.

First of all, we assume that according to the Scriptures the church is not only One Spirit with Him, but also One Body, a magnificent, richly structured, multiform and yet completely uniform

organism, the largest, most powerful, most comprehensive and most glorious that has ever taken shape and form in God's thoughts. This is something quite self-evident for everyone who knows himself to be baptized by the One Spirit with Christ into this One Body. It simply cannot be otherwise.

One only needs to let a single word (Eph. 1, 22) from the pen of the apostle Paul have its full effect on one, and one realizes that ordinary linguistic terms and vessels are no longer sufficient to adequately express what it means: He has given him, the risen and exalted above all, in his capacity as head over the whole of the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

To measure such depths and heights, our boldest thoughts fail. No language is sufficient to express it in a proper way. Only the Holy Spirit given to us, who searches all things, even the depths of God, empowers us to know what is given to us by God in them.

How real and essential the scripture wants to understand the mutual relationships of head and members is most clearly expressed in 1 Cor. 12:12: "Just as the body is one and yet has many members, but all the members, though many, form only one body, so also the Christ. Therefore Paul does not hesitate to understand the whole organism as a complete unity and to give it the name "the Christ".

Therefore, what is true of the perfected, glorious Head is equally true of His perfected Body. As Col. 3, 4 is written: But when Christ your life shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with him in glory. Just as there can be no talk of a revelation of the faithful in glory before the revelation of Christ Himself, the opposite is also not envisaged by Scripture.

The same is expressed in words like Rom. 8, 17: If children, then heirs, namely God's heirs and joint heirs of Christ, so we suffer differently with them, so that we may also be glorified with them. The most comprehensive commonality of suffering and glory.

Now, there are not only a number of such general statements of the Scriptures, but also quite a few that deal with the individual activities of the church to be glorified under and with its head. For example, when Paul exhorts the young church in Thessalonica (1 Thess. 2:12) to walk worthy of the God who called them, pointing out that this calling was done for His own kingdom and glory. Or when the apostle declares 2 Timothy 2:12: If we reign with them, we will also reign with them.

Already in the days of His flesh, Jesus held out the very definite prospect to His disciples that they would sit with Him on thrones and judge Israel at the rebirth of their people and state (Mat. 19:28). We do not mention this word because we see it as addressed to the believing congregation from the nations, but because it is characteristic for the clear comprehension of the repeatedly expressed ruling, as it is also held in prospect for the congregation on the conceivably highest levels.

The sayings of the apostle, e.g. 1. Cor. 6, 2.3, are aimed at this: Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? Do you not know that we will judge angels? If Satan is the prince of this world according to apostolic teachings and if he is allowed to influence the course of the present world according to Eph. 2, 2; Gal. 1, 4, which is in trouble 1. Joh. 5, 19, then it is impossible to think of an effective and thorough judgment of the world without the previous measures of Satan and his angels in the control of the world being discussed and condemned.

And when the apostle directly declares that we will judge angels, then nothing else is said than that the decisive questions about the further fate of the fallen angels will be presented to the bystanders in the trial, as in a jury court that of the human defendants is put into the hands of the jurors.

Thus, the various instructions that the Scriptures give us about the machinations of the powers of darkness also gain in importance. From these it is evident that they were given to us for very specific

practical purposes, so that we would one day be able to decide properly all the questions that would then be presented to us.

No less lies here the answer to the certainly often raised question: If we believers are saved from the authorities of darkness, why do these defeated powers still have so much freedom to make themselves also at children of God, to challenge them and to cause them hot fights? All these encounters with the evil spirits, the world rulers of this darkness, serve not only the personal testing and proving of the individual child of God - which they certainly do - but they are at the same time highly desirable opportunities to get to know the enemy from one's own experience, in order to be able to judge him and his own with better understanding one day.

This also includes words like Eph. 3, 10: "That now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places through the church. Certainly we have a good right to think of the principalities and powers mentioned here as holy and obedient angels of God. But there is no reason to reject the thought of powers hostile to God. The example of Job tells us much in this respect. For the instructions of God to Job were certainly not only exhausted in their intended effects in the probation and correction of his faithful servant, nor in the sharp correction which his friends and sorrowful comforters had to endure. The divine procedure with Satan, to whom he leaves a large margin against Job, but under determined and sharply measured restrictions, cannot be thought of in any other way than also to take into account the knowledge of Satan himself.

The greatest visual instruction of the wisdom of God (just objected by those excellently gifted but darkened angelic spirits) is given to those princes and powers who think themselves as clever and wise as the human children inspired by them, in whom they are allowed to have their being. All human wisdom conceit is only the reflex of the certainly not less terrible spiritual pride in those rulers of the kingdom of darkness.

And as certainly as it is true that God has made the wisdom of this world foolishness through the foolishness of his gospel, this is not only true of the human representatives of this worldly wisdom, but it is also true to an even greater degree of the originators of such madness, who believe that they can judge God and thus elevate themselves above him. That is the spirit of the Widerchristus, which denies the father and the son. And the inspiration for it supplies the Satan.

If this visual instruction for these proud angelic spirits is given to the congregation, which believes and confesses to have found its life, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification (holiness) and salvation in Christ Jesus, then this will be a significant moment in the balance when it comes to our judging the angels, when we provide them with the actual proof that all their arrogance is vain foolishness and all their proud height means nothing but shame and disgrace. Thus, with fullest justice, they will be relegated to hell and the most terrible judgment by fire, so that they will never blaspheme again.

If, however, as we cannot doubt, it is right, according to the Scriptures, to let such visual instruction be intended also for the fallen angels, then it is given that they must still possess a certain measure of moral responsibility. This is already given by the fact that they are to be judged by us. But this would have no sense if they were beings who were completely beyond a moral feeling.

One can come to this conclusion only if one takes into consideration that God has not thoughtlessly and haphazardly subordinated the course of the present world order to the prince of this world. This can have happened only under the self-evident condition of the moral responsibility of Satan for his world regiment. Therefore, it cannot be said that Satan's finite destiny has already been irreversibly fixed by his apostasy from God, which happened unmeasured eons ago, as it is usually presented. Rather, it seems to us that from these and other allusions it clearly emerges that God is ultimately counting on a final, complete re-subjugation of the entire kingdom of darkness and

destruction under the yoke of the crucified and resurrected One, which will take place on a thoroughly moral basis.

The judicial functions assigned to the church are so overwhelmingly great and far-reaching for the entire future development of the Kingdom of God, according to its character and its organic affiliation with Christ, that no other conclusion can be drawn from this than that the church has the highest and most glorious task imaginable in the entire realm of divine activity, the complete triumph of the good embodied in its head over the evil culminating in Satan. A triumph not of brute physical force, still less of total annihilation and dissolution of existence, but the triumph of the most holy, but unfathomably merciful and long-suffering love, which bears, hopes, endures everything, which never ceases.

This also seems to us to lie in the words of Eph. 2, 7 of the apostle, which are rich in content, where he promises in connection with our being raised and transferred together with Christ into the heavenly regions, that in the future eons God will show the abundant riches of his grace through his goodness towards us in Christ. This leads to the conclusion that there will be manifestations of divine grace through the glorified, exalted body of Christ, such as no age has ever seen before.

Of all the previous manifestations of divine grace towards his fallen creatures, the calling and election of a congregation from all nations are the highest and most wonderful. In them the image of the Son of His love shall and will be perfectly restored. They will be transformed into his image out of all depths of sin

This prepares them for the understanding of an exuberant revelation of divine mercy against the worst and most bitter enemies imaginable, formerly true "sons of God" of the Most High, and for the assumption of a revelation and activity of God's righteousness, which it itself became through Him who knew no sin 2 Cor. 5:21.

For no one can measure the breadth, length, depth and height of divine love and mercy than the congregation of his saints rescued from the depths of ruin and the authority of darkness. It may and will always realize for all eternity that if God accomplished this with us, then there are no impossibilities for Him on the way of salvation and deliverance from sin, darkness, ruin and damnation. He who thus learned to judge himself may and will judge angels.

C The reward for the labor of his soul

This is a great word in that glorious chapter of the sufferings of God's anointed: From the labor of his soul he will see and be satisfied (Is 53:11). That is, he will be thoroughly and deeply satisfied by the final result of what went through his soul in suffering and unspeakable agony. And the prophet continues: "Therefore I will give him the great for a prey, and he shall receive the strong for a prey, because he gave up his soul to death and was counted among the transgressors and bore many sins and prayed for the transgressors.

Who are these great and strong ones? Can only weak and mortal men be meant by them? Are they not rather with certainty the same of whom the 103rd Psalm sings: Praise the Lord, you his angels, you strong heroes, who execute his command, obedient to the voice of his word? Are they not certainly the principalities, the powers, the rulers of the world, who were spoken of in the previous passage, when it was about the judgment that his congregation will exercise on them? Who would doubt it? For it is written: Him all gods (Elohim - sons of God) worship Ps. 97, 7; Hebr. 1, 6. Also this scripture cannot be broken. Rather, all that is written of Him in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

Scripture brings this to a tangible expression about the hope of his calling in two specific declarations, saying that God has appointed him

1. as heir over all, and
2. as head over all.

1. the heir above all

We encounter the word in Heb. 1 at the very beginning of the author's magnificent arguments about the Son's superior excellencies, perfections of power and majesty over the angels of all orders.

The core of the proof is the reference to the undisputed, unique Sonship of Him who for a time was placed lower than the angels, but who originally was and is the radiance of divine glory and the consummate expression of divine being, and who bears all things - even the disturbed universe riddled with the powers of death - with the word of His power; who through Himself accomplished the cleansing of our sins and has now seated Himself at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

This sonship establishes in a legally unshakeable way the inviolable right of inheritance, the future, unlimited right of disposal and administration over the entire universe, heaven, earth, air, hell and the realm of the dead.

Every thought of another, who could dispute with him under any title his inheritance over the universe or even over any still so small and modest area of the same, is excluded from the outset, is intolerable.

Equally unbearable is the other thought that the Son would not be able to effectively assert his right to the whole universe. This would be a miserable fiasco, which a simple-minded faithful interpretation of the Scriptures would never have expected of him, had it not fallen into servile bondage through the philosophy of men and loose seduction, loose play with biblical concepts, to which philosophical ones were attributed, of which the Scriptures know nothing.

We have already dealt with this legal question in a special section above. But it will hardly do any harm to remind us of it again. It is valued too low by a theology which values the creative will much too high.

Now it is in the concept of an heir and inheritance that the same is not yet a present possession, but the object of hopeful, but confident expectation. Hebr. 2,8 also says: "Now we do not yet see that everything is subject to him. From this it follows that the whole question is merely one of simple, childlike faith in the face of the concise, clear statements of the divine word. As it is also said of the Son: He trusted God.

This means that we are dealing here with divine realities which elude any possibility of scientific proof as completely as the nature of God himself. They want and must be believed.

Therefore, they are especially suited to serve us as a touchstone of our faith. We are like Abraham at that time, when God told him to step in front of his tent, to count the stars and then promised him: "This is how your seed shall be! There follows only one word: Abraham believed the Lord, and he counted this to him as righteousness.

They were not truths of salvation, they were not dogmatic propositions of repentance and conversion that God held out to him; they were great, unmeasured promises that God gave him to believe when he had no son.

But God was sure of his cause with his friend Abraham, whom he himself had raised to ever more powerful faith by ever greater promises. Faith grows and strengthens with the increasing promises of God.

Therefore, there is no greater honor for the believing community than that it trusts God with the seemingly impossible, in spite of all rational thinking, solely on his word. And it is our God's greatest

joy when he sees himself taken at his word by us and perceives that he can always take his mouth fuller against us without us rejecting it or restricting him with our very puny ifs and buts.

Thus, in great simplicity, but in unlimited extension, the word stands before us of the heir over all. The genuine faith rejoices that it can grasp this without any compromise, take it up in itself, consider it, move it and rest in it, in view of all the efforts, no matter how enormous, of the prince of darkness, the father of lies, to hang all kinds of philosophical and theological question marks behind it.

Difficulties and questions? Certainly there are enough of them. There were also for the childless Abraham, who should believe that his seed would be like the stars of the sky in quantity. All medical faculties of the world would have given the opinion: Excluded, simply impossible!

So the whole scientific theology may prepare with the greatest seriousness to give the expert opinion: Completely excluded! To be limited only to the faithful! The childlike faith does not let itself be upset by it: God has said: To the heir above all! There it remains!

How our God wants to accomplish this is up to him. But if our faith can somehow serve him, then it should not be lacking. And it will not be lacking. He will take care of that himself, the faithful God!

The one who has the greatest interest that the congregation of God should not believe this according to its extent is none other than the liar from the beginning. It is obvious that he is interested in impairing the son in every direction, in damaging his claims to unconditional faith and inevitable obedience as much as possible. It is also obvious that he wants to give himself the appearance of not being completely overcome and destroyed, but also to impress the believers as an important ruler, who knows how to spoil the game of the almighty God most effectively and to deprive the son just as successfully of the greatest part of the reward for which his soul has worked.

In this field, at any rate, he has quite significant achievements to show. To his greatest satisfaction, conventional theology has worked out dogmatic doctrines about the endless damnation of by far the greatest mass of mankind. And these mean a direct denial of the simple divine declaration that God has appointed his Christ heir over all.

For centuries, however, people have somehow managed to come to terms with this quite well. Thank God that theology does not have the last word on this. Faith does not allow itself to be dominated by theology. It trusts in the simple, unabridged word of the almighty God, the Father of Christ. And in this, he will be just as unscathed as Abraham.

In which way one has to think of the final seizure of the whole universe by the rightful heir over everything is certainly not a completely idle question. Eph. 1, 14 can serve us, that the Holy Spirit of promise is the pledge of our inheritance until the redemption of the property, to the praise of His glory.

The connection of these words with each other makes it clear that the apostle is speaking of something that is still in the unforeseeable future, but is guaranteed to us by the Holy Spirit of promise as the pledge of our inheritance.

Of course, there is no thought that we would then have to inherit something in which our glorious head as the heir over all would not have the first share. It can therefore be assumed as quite certain that the redemption of property envisaged for that future is to be interpreted precisely in terms of the object that concerns us here.

What do we mean by this "ownership" and by the promised redemption? Does the Scripture give us any tangible answer to these two questions? Yes!

As far as the first word "property" is concerned, we do not find it very often in the NT, but often enough that we can get a clear idea of what it means. Paul uses it 2 Thess. 2, 14: ... called, through our gospel, to the "possession" of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. There we are on quite related ground. For we are not merely dealing with outward appearances of splendor and light of our glorious Lord, but with the revelation of His glory in the taking possession of that over which He has been appointed heir.

In 1. Petr. 2, 9 the same word is written: You are a chosen generation... a people to own or possess. Whether we think of Peter's designation as the faithful selection from Israel or interpret it to mean the whole chosen congregation of the saints, in any case the word "possession" refers to personalities, not to things or inanimate objects.

The remaining passage in which the word occurs, Hebr. 10, 34, also refers to the personal soul and therefore agrees with the other uses of the word.

The other word, which is correctly translated as salvation, occurs so often in this meaning that there can be no honest doubt about its correct interpretation. See Luk 21:28; Rom 3:24; 8:23; 1 Cor 1:30; Eph 1:7; 4:30; Col 1:14; Heb 9:15; 11:35.

We are not wrong in assuming that especially in Luk. 21, 28; Rom. 8, 23; 1. Cor. 1, 30 and Eph. 4, 30 the future redemption of the body from death and mortality is mentioned.

Thus it would be quite clear in front of our mind's eye that we will have to think first of all of the raising from the dead when we redeem the property (which was legally acquired through his blood).

This is also clearly confirmed by 2 Cor. 5, 5, where the apostle justifies the transformation of our mortal body into an immortal body by saying: "God has prepared us for this very purpose by giving us the Spirit as a pledge. In the same sense he speaks of the same subject in Rom. 8, 11: "If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

From this it follows with great certainty that the means ordained by God and to be used by His Christ one day to redeem His legal possession will be that of raising Him from the dead.

It is precisely this that is described by Paul Rom. 8, 23 as the great, official act of our institution into sonship with him, the firstborn among many brethren, a word that again points to the firstfruits of the Spirit, which we already have as a guarantee, as a guarantee of the redemption of our body, in which sonship is fulfilled.

First of all, the heir will take possession of everything in his own body, in the community, which means his fullness. This is irrefutably clear from the apostolic words mentioned so far. But this is only the beginning.

Then, according to Eph. 2, 7, it will and must continue by means of the perfected congregation of this course of time, transformed into its own image of glory through resurrection.

The next area for such a formal and effective seizure of the acquired property will be Israel, as Rom. 11, 25. 26 is written: Blindness happened to Israel in part, until the full number of the Gentiles was received and thus all Israel was saved. And Israel's promised acceptance is described by the same apostle in the same chapter and context as life from the dead. This is how the prophet Hosea 6:2 already saw it when he wrote: "After two days he will make us alive, on the third day he will raise us up to live before him. The third day in prophecy always has to do with resurrection truth.

To the same goes also that great vision of the dead bones of the whole house of Israel, as Ezekiel 37, 12. 13 got to see and to which God himself supplied him the only reliable interpretation: I will open your graves, and I will bring you out of your graves as my people, and bring you again into your

land; and ye shall know that I am Jehovah, when I shall open your graves, and bring you out of your graves as my people.

The objection is probably raised here that this is figurative speech. Of course, we readily admit this; but we note that the same God who may make use of such an image will also be able to let the figurative follow the literal execution. Otherwise, where would be the power and meaning of such a great image?

Can God gather again a people scattered over the whole earth, as the prophet saw those scattered and splintered bones come together and realized how they were covered with sinews, flesh and skin, but were still without spirit? and can God breathe his spirit into a people's body that has only been reorganized outwardly, so that it arises to new, blessed, national life, a great army for Jehovah, - and he should not then be able to gather again also the bones of his beloved people that have actually decayed and been scattered all over the world, and to awaken them to new, imperishable life?

One would like to ask a Christianity that doubts this, like Paul: Why should it be unbelievable among you that God raises the dead?

Among the powerful manifestations of His divine mission, His true Messiahship, Jesus' raising of the dead, as reported to us, does not stand in the last row. Does it mean nothing to us that the Messiah called back from the dead the little daughter of Jairus, the young man of Nain and Lazarus, who was already decomposing, on Jewish soil?

These were not yet resurrections to immortality as with him. We must hold on to this difference. But they are all the more important to show us how it belongs to the actual work of the Redeemer of Israel to call his people back from the bonds of the grave and death into life.

There can be no doubt that Jesus will do this on a large scale during and after his return, especially on Israelite soil through his appointed disciples and apostles. He himself gave them already in those days the definite order: "Raise the dead! He surely told them that they would not be able to finish this task in the cities of Israel before His return from heaven (Matt. 10, 8.23).

One must be careful not to diminish or take away from these miraculous works of the Lord and His by applying them only to the spiritual realm. Such application certainly has its justification, but it must not claim to be the sole explanation for the things that have happened. They mean exactly what they represent, an actual liberation of humanity and creation groaning under the bonds of want, hunger, disease, death. Death, I will be a poison to you, realm of the dead, I will be a pestilence to you! The rich content of delicious applicability to the spiritual life is truly not affected by leaving those deeds of the Lord their natural meaning.

How much weight the Lord himself puts on the fact that the Father has given him authority over all flesh, so that he may give eternal life to all whom the Father has given him, is sufficiently evident from the frequency with which he uses the promise: I will raise him up at the last day - He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die - I give unto them eternal life.

But Israel is only God's only begotten son among the nations of the earth. That is why Isaiah 25:6-8 says: "And on this mountain the Lord of hosts will prepare a banquet for all the nations, a fat banquet, a banquet of old wines, of fat, pithy food, of old purified wines. He will also take away on this mountain the veil wherewith all nations are covered, and the covering wherewith all nations are covered: He will swallow up death forever. The Lord Jehovah shall wipe away the tears from all faces, and shall put away the reproach of his people from all the earth! Yes, the Lord has promised.

What is this veil or covering with which the nations are covered and veiled? The answer to this is unequivocally given by Paul's words in 2 Cor. 4:4: Under which the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, so that they do not see the bright light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

And Gal. 3, 22 declares that God has included all under sin and thus death, the wages of sin. And Rom. 11, 32 says: God has included all under sin so that he might have mercy on all.

In view of such testimonies, what does it mean that the covering is to be removed from the faces of all nations? No less than what the same miraculous procedure of the God of Israel with his own chosen people will also mean when his judgment of hardening will have come to an end and the time of his gracious acceptance will have come. It will be life from the dead, and therefore the result of such unveiling as the prophecy promises can mean nothing less. For God is not only the God of the Jews, he is also the God of the Gentiles.

But who can imagine it, if really once the covers fall, which have hung over the peoples for millennia, which the father of lies has woven, in order to prevent that the eyes of the peoples were opened about the truth, as it is in the Christ of God. What an awakening it will be when the ends of the world will see the salvation of God! Even the boldest imagination will fall short of what will then become reality.

And in the center of the whole glorious prophecy the mighty word rises: He will devour death forever! And he who had the power of death was the devil. What then remains of his dreamed and real power? What remains of a firmly organized kingdom of darkness, with which he could blind the eyes of a whole mankind and keep away the truth?

And our God put up with this for thousands of years. And how easily he could have prevented it! Is this not the best guarantee that the matter will also be settled so thoroughly and completely that all death will be totally cleared up forever.

A whole humanity brought from the darkness of death to the light of life! How the heavens will rejoice, the earth will tremble with joy, the whole creation will breathe a new sigh of relief at such a change of things. This is what the Lord of hosts will do in his time. This is one of the most solemn acts in the great drama of the final seizure of the so dearly acquired property, as it is written: "Cry unto me, and I will give thee the heathen for an inheritance, and the ends of the earth for a possession" (Ps. 2:8).

But what will then become of the princes and mighty ones, the previous world rulers of darkness, the evil spirits under heaven? The Scripture clearly gives the answer: Their part will be in the lake of fire, which is the other death. And if anyone was not found in the Lamb's book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:10, 15).

If the wonderful ways of God with his church, with Israel, with the whole world of nations have the same character, if all great thoughts of God with the whole world of mankind run undeniably through sin, death and destruction to the final deliverance from all power of darkness, and if in our God's hand death is only the wonderful means for the purpose of bringing forth a completely new life, which no death can ever harm, why then should the Lord of hosts, by whom and to whom are all things, renounce this so considerable a part of his rightful inheritance, those multitudes of fallen, darkened, most fearfully alienated, hostile, once glorious "sons of God"?

And if death, as can be clearly seen from Scripture, is only the passage to new, imperishable life, what entitles us to say that the second death means the exact opposite of this? Is it then also the way of our God to deal in this way with the language which he himself created and gave to mankind?

Or should God have set his own thoughts to the life an insurmountable barrier for himself in all eternities? If there would be a death which in no way and under no circumstances could ever be devoured by life, it would be undoubtedly much more powerful than life! And who would then have power over such a death? The devil certainly not, because he is delivered to his judgment to that very second death, the lake of fire, he must suffer it!

The only one who has such power can only be God. But if He has it, then it is quite natural that the second death can only be His servant, but never His master, then God must also be able to make use of this second death, for which He made use of death in the first place, in order to bring the glories of His imperishable life to light in an all the more overwhelming way.

This is also clear from the simple, meaningful words of Jesus about the fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Mat. 25:41). That this fire is not endless, but only for eons, we have repeatedly recognized from the Scriptures. That it is *prepared* clearly says that it will serve fixed divine purposes of judgment, the most terrible chastisement and rebuke. That these purposes also come from the infinite love and wisdom of God is self-evident, for God is light in which there is no darkness at all.

Therefore, the shattering judgment by fire, which will be exercised on Satan and his angels, may well be included in the great act of taking possession of the property irrefutably acquired through his cross and blood. The church sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise has an undeniable interest in this, because it is his body, his fullness. God has made him heir over all.

2. the head above all

There are two parallel lines which are drawn to us in these two so significant words about our glorious Lord. But while the expression of the heir over all has more to do with the question of the legal belonging of the whole universe to him, who acquired it as his undisputed property, in the other word of his headship over the universe the emphasis lies on the *inner harmony and unity of being that* is meant between him and the whole reconciled universe.

Already in the beginning of this scripture, when we talked about the divine plan of eternity, we pointed out the declared intention of our God to bring all things together under one head in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth (Eph. 1, 10). We want to go into this delicious thought of our great God in more detail, especially since it is the believing church to which God gave his Christ in this special capacity, as it is expressed in Eph. 1, 23: He gave him as the head of the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

But if God has given or assigned him to his community in this wonderful capacity, then the way for the community is clearly shown how it has to behave towards him, which concerns just his main dominion over the universe. Under no circumstances is it able to refuse the declared will of its God without being guilty of pronounced disobedience.

To a careful observer of the actual attitude of believing circles toward this clear divine declaration of will, however, it cannot escape notice that at this very point there is an alarming failure on the part of the faithful. alone as regards understanding and desire for deeper knowledge on these lines of divine revelation in Christ.

In accordance with the truth, it may be assumed that in the circles of the serious and sanctified children of God there is no lack of inclination to be guided and inwardly encouraged in all areas of divine knowledge that are directly related to the personal life of salvation and experience. The immensely rich literature on sanctification of our days bears eloquent witness to this. One can certainly rejoice in this with all one's heart.

It is undeniable, however, that in all this immensely extensive literature the dominant point of view is that of the thoroughly personal life of salvation. The deep digging, the rich drawing from the

fullness of Christ is done for the express purpose of enriching the experiential life of the individual believer and that of the entire community. This in itself is by no means to be rejected or belittled. We do not want to be understood as if we do not appreciate or even reject all these efforts to open up the glorious fullness of salvation in Christ to the believing community. However, we believe that precisely in this effort to enrich one's own salvation and congregational life, the purpose is not achieved because the divine lines for this are not observed.

A very similar mistake is avenged here, as it has been committed for centuries in another area of the faithful interpretation of the Scriptures for the congregation of God, when one thought to enrich them by teaching them to push Israel out of its rightful place and to put themselves in its place. This was called a "more spiritual interpretation" of prophecy than that which left the words of the prophets as they were addressed to Israel. Today it is recognized in wide circles that one not only did not enrich oneself by this, but that one thereby drew the short straw and robbed oneself of rich treasures of divine prophecy and knowledge, since one did not leave Israel its own and did not bring the congregation closer to its own heavenly calling in Christ Jesus. Here it is a question of the same principle; but because it happens on an even higher ground, the damage is all the more alarming.

It will be immediately apparent to any thinking Christian that the truth of Christ's headship over the universe is by its very nature beyond the possibility of personal experience, just as the great deeds promised by God to His people Israel should never nor can ever become the object of our personal experience of salvation.

No child of God can ever experientially grasp and comprehend Christ as the Head over the universe. The measure of experience fails completely in the face of such a truth of revelation.

But who would claim that therefore the thorough and deep knowledge of this glorious truth is without value and importance for the children of God? This would make him a judge and critic of the almighty God, who declares in his word that he gave his Christ to the church in this capacity. This should be of no practical value for the prosperity, perfection and maturity of the church of God?

But if the church has received Christ in this capacity from God, then it must first try to recognize him in this position as the head over all. It must devote all its attention to obtaining from the Scriptures, which testify of Him, a full and clear view on all sides of the entire scope of such a designation.

Has the church done this? Does it do so today, when it sees itself driven on all sides to consider most seriously the possibility of his soon return from heaven and to prepare itself for it? Can she really believe that she can appear before him without embarrassment if she should be examined at this point as to how far she has taken it upon herself to grasp him from the Scriptures as the "head over the universe" assigned to her by God? Will she be able to excuse herself by saying that she believed she could limit herself only to what was necessary for the cultivation of her personal life of salvation?

How often one can hear that inquiring, questioning children of God are virtually warned and deterred from engaging in such "speculations" that would have no practical significance for the impact of their own salvation.

This goes so far that even dear servants of God, to whom God has opened their eyes to the whole glorious fullness of the headship of Christ over the universe, allow themselves to be so intimidated by the ruling direction, which claims to be the only one justified, that they do not even dare to come out freely and openly with the knowledge given to them, let alone to point out to the congregation their highly sacred task of seriously dealing with these things, so that they may be found in full obedience to the truth. They want to allow such knowledge as a quiet private possession, but to bring it to the attention of the congregation - no, that could be dangerous! Can there be secret teachings and knowledge in the church that is in Christ, in which all members of the body of Christ

may not have an equal share? We do not see the church of God as having a caste of specially initiated people, opposed to the laity.

There is no doubt that one stood in the light for oneself and the whole community when one thought to be able to keep the precious knowledge of Christ as the head over the universe for oneself and to cultivate it. For nothing is more effective to help the believing community out of the unspeakably sad self-care and self-motion than the clarified view of the one who is the head over all, who is infinitely more than "my personal Savior", who is the propitiation not only for our sin but for that of the whole world.

Nothing helps more to a victorious life of faith than looking to a truly victorious Savior who has made a triumph out of all the powers of darkness and death and has put them in the stocks, has swallowed up death in victory, to whom death, damnation and perdition are never insurmountable obstacles but only opportunities to prove himself Christ Triumphant over them under all circumstances. By this alone one gains such a quiet confidence, free from carnal restlessness and driving, in the proclamation of salvation to a lost world. God was in Christ and has effectively reconciled the world to Himself, and He, the Head over all, will also finally succeed in bringing all to the complete, willing obedience of faith and love.

Only faith in an absolutely indomitable Savior, who possesses the keys of death and Hades, who is unqualified Lord over the dead and the living, gives true confidence of victory for proclamation in his name.

But we have to look more closely at what the apostle's word has to say to us, so that the believing community can also acquire this knowledge and use it for its inner life.

That word happens in a significant context. It is closely connected with the preceding declaration that God, who raised Him from the dead, has also set Him at His right hand in the heavenly regions, high above every principality and power, authority, dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come, and has put all things under His feet (Eph. 1:20-22).

This clearly indicates the extent to which the headship of Christ is to be conceived and how it is to be effectively presented. The language used by the apostle is so detailed and comprehensive that it is impossible to imagine any area of the great creation of our God that could be excluded from this submission to his feet.

No matter how great, how powerful one may think of the horrible kingdom of darkness, of the evil spirits under heaven, the rulers of the present evil course of the world, they cannot be excluded from the list given here. Any attempt to assume a kingdom of evil in any form excluded from unconditional submission to Christ must fail because of the completeness of this information.

There can never be a dominion in the creation of God in all eternity, over which the son of God would not have the sole right of determination, the unconditional control. Whatever there may be for unmeasured periods of hell, of terrible powers of destruction, of powers of ruin for soul and body, everything is subject to his supreme command without limitation. This must be unbreakably established for everyone who believes the Word of God. The simple, honest wording and literal sense of these divine words of institution do not allow any other interpretation.

Let us for the moment leave the question entirely to ourselves, whether and when the Lord can influence the evil will of all fallen angels, devils or demons in a salutary way or not, whether he will ever be able to break it and make it submissive to his holy will of love; this much is unshakably certain: above his will stands no other for all eternity, above his holy and glorious name never a higher, mightier, more powerful one.

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him alone. This can never be shaken. The words used here by the apostle cannot mean less even to the most zealous representative of the doctrine of endless damnation of the wicked, if God's word applies to him at all.

Also, one is quite ready not only to admit this, but also to rely firmly on it when it comes to the question of the absolute security of those who are redeemed by Christ. There one insists with the greatest insistence and indeed with the fullest right that no one can snatch them out of his hand!

One cannot do otherwise if one does not want to expose oneself and all the redeemed to uncertainty. One must have an almighty Lord and Savior who is absolutely exalted above all powers and authorities, otherwise eternal bliss and security is a precarious matter.

If there were a power of evil, death and destruction that would be superior to his, then the work of Christ would be in danger of being destroyed and annihilated by such overpowering powers.

A close examination clearly shows that our preservation by the Lord is tied to our faithfulness and is considered effective only through it. So, once again, it is the annoying subjectivism that pushes its way in and leads the big word.

Because who does not believe, the almighty Lord cannot help him under any circumstances against the darkness powers of wickedness. His reliability stands and falls with our faith, is thus conditioned by processes in me or you. Thereby one comes quite naturally on a dead track

No less is this the case with the assumption, as it is inseparable from the conventional doctrine of endless damnation, that the kingdom of Satan, the adversary of God and his saints will continue without end into all eternity. It is a kingdom of impenetrable, hopeless darkness, of conscious but unbroken rebellion, blasphemy, rage, indignation, and never-ending enmity against the Christ and His, and therefore, of course, a kingdom of unspeakable, desperate, but never-eliminable, not even mitigable torment.

Now one is confronted with a quite unbearable dilemma: Either he, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth, who has the name above all names, is not able to set a worthy goal for such monstrous conditions within the limits of his great universe, which has its existence only in him --- where is then his omnipotence, his unlimited authority over all flesh and over all power, height and force? - or else, and we shudder to even say it - he does not want it any other way, he wants the endless reign of sin, of the insolent, immoderate, defiant, unbroken rebellion, of the most insane enmity against him and his own.

No wonder that in many believing circles such a thought was found so unbearable, so unspeakably hideous, so blasphemous, that they resorted to the subterfuge of accepting the total annihilation of the hopelessly godless, of the devil and all his comrades in the angelic and human world.

Because it is completely impossible that somewhere in his whole area something so monstrous as the doctrine of endless hell wickedness and enmity requires and sets, could exist *without his will*. But to let him *want* something like that, that can only be done by - - no, no real child of God can do that with calm thinking.

One can only come to terms with this by blindly following what the prevailing church, community or assembly dogma decrees.

But the way out sought in the doctrine of annihilation leads to no better goal than the ghastly doctrine which one would like to escape with it. For it is and remains in the deepest depth the undoubted denial of the omnipotence of our glorious Lord to cope with all hostile powers in an absolutely perfect way, under fullest preservation of the personal freedom of every intelligent creature in such a way that all creatures in heaven and on earth and in the sea join in praise and glory and adoration to our God and the Lamb.

The doctrine of annihilation dares to ascribe the bankruptcy to the head over everything, to claim from him that he could only reach the undisturbed autocracy by simply depriving his incorrigible opponents of their existence, by hurling them into the nothingness, and that with human children who were created in the image of God. Under all circumstances they owed their existence, like also the angel worlds, of whose former glory we have only a very weak idea, to his infinite, unchangeable love, paired with never missing, perfect wisdom.

And he, who saw and foreknew the end from the beginning, he, who is aware of all his works from the beginning, he should, he could have wanted that these his wonderful creatures never reached their true purpose, to be there only for his honor, but should be completely destroyed by himself?! For our thinking a monstrosity as great as that of endless, useless, aimless and purposeless agony and torture.

But it is not our thinking that is decisive in these matters, but only his unmistakable, truthful word. And how does the Scripture describe to us the outcome of the headship of the Son, which the Father has appointed for the whole universe? Its testimony is simple, clear and unambiguous: Because he was obedient to death, even to the death of the cross, God has exalted him all the more, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, heavenly, earthly and subterranean, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2, 10. 11).

The extent of this promise is first again all-embracing. There is no area of the whole wide creation, the human or the angelic, the upper or the lower world, which made an exception of this.

The same tone is struck by Rev. 5.13: Every creature that is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and that which is in the sea, and all that is in them, I heard say, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Again, there is nothing to limit in this. If words have a meaning, then they have no other than that every creature is brought to give glory to God and the Lamb.

It is a recognition of the inexorable meaning of these words, which encompass the whole universe, that one, in order to soften their force, fell upon the thought to teach that they will have to confess his name, to bend the knees before him, but only forced, in unbroken hostility! How such a confession could at all serve "for the glory of God the Father", one will forever remain guilty of proving. But the testimony of the Scriptures, explained by the Scriptures, is so clear also on this point that the simple-minded cannot be mistaken at all.

The source from which Paul, through the Spirit, draws the language for his statement is unmistakably the prophecy of Isaiah (45:23-25): "I swear by myself, righteousness goes out of my mouth, a word that will not be taken back: To me every knee shall bow and every tongue swear. Verily he that cometh to me shall say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength! All who resist me must be put to shame. All the seed of Israel shall boast in the Lord and be justified.

Granted that there the perimeter is a limited one, that there is still talk of those who resist him; but that does not change the fact that the words about bending the knees and swearing the tongue have nothing of a reluctant, forced character about them.

Those of whom this is said boast of the righteousness and strength they have in the Lord. If the Word of God is the only standard for how to understand a word, then this reference settles the question.

However, it is still strengthened by another circumstance, which can be easily verified by every careful Bible researcher. For the sake of the importance of the subject we like to reproduce here what is written in volume VII (1913) of the monthly magazine "Das Prophetische Wort" by C. F. Dallmus about Phil. 2, 9-11: He saysThe strongest reason for the assumption that the confession promised here will be a willing, convinced and pleasing to God lies for us in the fact: The expression

homologein used here occurs in many other passages of the NT, some of which we will mention here to prove in which sense this confession wants to be understood. Mt. 10. 32 Jesus promises the one who confesses Him before men that He will also confess Him before His Father and the angels. No one can doubt what kind of confession is meant here. Joh. 1, 20 John confesses: I am not the Christ! There is no trace of unwillingness and compulsion here either. Joh. 9, 22 the Jews agree that whoever would acknowledge Jesus should be expelled from the synagogue. They certainly did not think of coercion. Acts 23, 8 testifies to the Pharisees that in contrast to the Sadducees they confessed both a resurrection and the existence of angels. Acts 24, 14 Paul confesses his faith in the Nazarene before the governor Felix with great boldness and without coercion. Rom. 10, 9. 10 speaks twice of confessing with the mouth that Jesus is Lord, thus the same phrase as Phil. 2, to be saved. The correspondence between the content of this passage and the one we are looking at here is very noteworthy. 1 Tim. 6, 12 Paul testifies to his son Timothy that he confessed a good confession, which was also not a reluctant confession.

The reader should compare Mt. 7, 23; 14, 7; Joh. 12, 42; Acts 7, 17 (where *homologein* is translated as "had sworn"); Tit. 1, 16; Hebr. 11, 13; 13, 15; 1. Joh. 1, 9; 2, 23; 4, 2.3. 15; 2. Joh. 7; Rev. 3, 5. For the noun (*homologia*) there is also 2. Cor. 9, 13; 1. Tim. 6, 12. 13; Hebr. 3, 1; 4, 14; 10, 23.

For the one who does not know Greek it is to be noted that the word *homologein* used here is composed of *homos*, which means as much as "equal, agreeing", and the time word *legein* "to speak, to say". From this then arises the meaning of "to speak or speak in agreement (with another)", hence confess.

Now every reader can convince himself that in all the given passages the word is used only in the sense of a quite casual, voluntary, even joyful confession. Besides that there is a strengthened form of the time word; *exomologein* or in the passive *exomologeisthai*. Thus in Mt. 3, 6; Mk. 1, 5; Acts 19, 18; Jam. 5, 16. Here it is about confessions of sin. The preposition *ex* is added to the usual *homologein* to express that these confessions came from the heart.

In this intensified form the word appears e.g. also twice in that well-known address of the Son to his heavenly Father, Mt. 11, 25; Lk. 10, 21. There it literally says: I confess to you from the bottom of my heart, Father; which has been translated meaningfully with "I praise you, Father."

The same intensified form also occurs Rom. 14, 11; 15, 9 (where it was also translated: I will praise you among the Gentiles); and Rev. 3, 5, also in the present Philippians passage.

With this we have listed all passages in which the NT uses this word. In not a single one is there even the remotest hint of a forced confession. On the contrary, there are several examples in which the meaning of joyful, thankful praise is rightly attributed to the word.

So much for our witness. To confirm what has been said, it should be noted that Mt. 7, 21-23 (Lk. 13, 25-27), where Jesus prophesies that many would come and say: Lord, Lord! Here the tense word *homologein* is not used, but only *legein*, which clearly distinguishes between a true confession of the heart that he is the Lord and a mere lip-speaking, which is dishonest and untruthful. But he himself confesses (*homologein*) to them: I have never known you.

If a word occurs in more than 35 passages of the NT, and not once in the sense of a reluctant, forced confession, then the proof is as firm as can be desired that the word in question has the meaning of an unforced, voluntary, heartfelt confession, and any attempt to impute a thoroughly different, even opposite sense to the word in the passage in question is thus directed.

It is understandable that one wonders how this should happen, that beings who have hardened themselves through eons in the most bitter and dogged enmity, in open indignation, in irrepressible pride and defiance against the majesty and love of the glorious Savior God, should nevertheless finally learn to worship and praise at His feet? But should anything be impossible to the Lord?

Our great Master will also succeed in this crowning masterpiece! Can even a man who has become a friend, even a redeemed, joyful child of God from a conscious enemy of God, do otherwise in his deepest soul than exult at the mere thought of it?

Whoever, through the illuminating grace in Christ, has been allowed to look into the unfathomable depths of his own sinfulness, into the possibilities of pride, defiance, despondency, unkindness, unforgiveness, miserableness, tenacious prejudice, indifference, unbrotherliness and a thousand other bondages of one's own being, he no longer stands so completely incredulous before such possibilities of incomprehensible love, kindness and unfathomable compassion even towards creatures which for us mean the embodiment of all wicked, shameful being.

Or can one really discover in the thought of such a triumph of divine grace something that could never be rhymed or reconciled with the biblical ideas of divine nature and divine attributes? Would not the most severe justice and holiness of God be satisfied by eons of the most terrible punishment and chastisement of hell, even in the worst cases of diabolical depravity, wickedness and perfidy? This cannot be...

But in this matter, as in others, it is not human reasoning and judgment that decides, but only the firm prophetic word. And this is so unambiguous and striking that it could not be expressed more clearly if one wanted to try.

It is merely the centuries-long deprivation of our spiritual eye of such a shining light, which at first makes us almost incapable of taking it in and bearing it. But if one lets the full, unbroken light work, then indescribable delight floods us because of such unimagined glory of our great Savior God.

D The all reconciliation (1. Cor. 15, 24-28)

1. the abolition of all domination, violence and power

The scriptural word, from which we take the following revelations, belongs to the most far-reaching of all divine revelations about the future. It reaches far beyond the framework of the visions which were given to the seer on Patmos by the Lord.

It is of importance that we understand this exactly and visualize it when we read the Scriptures, namely the last book of the Bible. The thought is so obvious that this book, which forms the conclusion of the NT, therefore also directs the believing view into the very last goals of divine thoughts with his creation. But whoever carefully reads the concluding words (22, 12. 13), which the Lord lets testify to John about the character of the messages he received, will easily recognize that they point far beyond to Him, who announces: Behold, I come soon, and my reward with me, to recompense every man according to his work. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

With this the Lord already gives to understand that what has been said and seen so far is not yet the last end of what is to come. He himself is still future, contains in his person and the not yet completed mission the conclusion of God's thoughts and ways with creation. This becomes even clearer in the following words (V, 14. 15): "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters and everyone who loves and does falsehood. There is the speech of such, who are to attain first authority to the tree of the life, whose life can have reached therefore still by no means the final completion. Furthermore, there is a reference to those who are outside, obviously outside the blessed influence of the holy city, and who are called dogs, i.e. unclean, sorcerers, fornicators, and so on.

One may think what one wants about the final outcome of the divine work of redemption, but this much is certain: such conditions as the ones described here, which will then still exist on earth, can never be brought into harmony with the simple but great target word for God's ways of 1 Cor. 15:28. It is equally inconceivable that this part of the divine program could be fulfilled beforehand and then still leave dogs, sorcerers, fornicators and the like outside.

It may therefore be assumed with great confidence that the program of 1 Cor. 15 encompasses an incomparably larger circle than the final words to John, which cannot be regarded as the conclusion of all divine activity for the salvation of a lost world. For Scripture can never contradict itself, nor can one word of Scripture ever abrogate or invalidate another

The horizon of Rev. 22 is therefore unmistakably narrower and more limited than that of 1 Cor. 15:24-28.

Let us now come closer to the revelations that Paul has to give us in the words placed at the top of this passage. The order of the resurrection of all the dead, which takes place in orderly sequence, was spoken of in verse 23. For he had previously said: "Just as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But not all at the same time, but according to an order determined by God, which is marked by great epoch-making events. Three definite sequences of stages stand out clearly:

1. The firstling Christ
2. Afterwards those who belong to Christ at his return
3. After that the end (i.e. the conclusion of the resurrections)

Only the resurrection of the Christ, which appears as the first (Col. 1, 18), and which is at the same time the beginning and origin of all following ones, can be assigned to the past. The other two groups of resurrections are undoubtedly still in the future.

The temporal distance of the resurrection of the Christ from the resurrection of those who belong to him, which is to happen at his return, is considerable. A period of nineteen centuries has already passed, and Christ has not yet returned.

If you let your sober gaze be guided by such measures of time that the great God decrees and uses, then you will gain an understanding of the measurement of what is yet to come.

For it is obvious that between the resurrection of the members of the body of Christ, who make up only a modest part of the dead, and the end, which will come only afterwards and with which the whole glorious harvest of the entire dead humanity will be brought back to life in Christ, even more significant periods of time will pass than the nineteen centuries, which now already separate the resurrection of the firstfruits from that of his dearly bought community of firstfruits from all nations, Jews and Gentiles.

We readily admit and even expect that the teachings of the risen Lord at and after his return through the church transfigured into his own image of glory will then move at a somewhat faster pace and achieve a greater effectiveness. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the area of the realm of the dead that still has to be worked on is of enormous extent, especially if one anticipates what only emerges in v. 26: Death is dismissed as the last enemy.

There still events must happen before in heaven, on earth and under the earth, for whose due execution not small measured eons might be necessary.

This is also the point of Eph. 2, 7: so that in the future eons he would show the abundant riches of his grace through his goodness toward us in Christ. We must not let ourselves be narrowed down by the popular conventional constriction of the last things into a frame that is as short as possible.

One measured there almost exclusively with the limited measure of the personal salvation only of a small selection of believers. For the endless condemnation of all the rest, however, only a short cruel sentence was needed. There remained nothing more than opportunities for the demonstration of God's exuberant grace. The church orthodoxy wanted that to be over forever.

No wonder that one could not come to a view for the great divine horizons in eons following each other according to plan. One needed upward only the very narrow hatch, through which one saw for himself the beautiful sky and a narrow gap downward, in which one did a shudder-filled look down into the endless hell of all other people. The scripture is different!

We have to do here mainly with the third part of this great divine program, which opens us the prospect into unmeasured distances: *After that the end.*

This end will be further defined according to its miraculous content by saying: 1. when he, Christ, will hand over the kingdom to God and Father, 2. when he will have abolished all rule, authority and power.

Obviously, the first mentioned handing over of the kingdom to his father will only be able to follow the final abolition of all rule, violence and power. This can be seen from the directly following words of the 25th verse: He must reign until all his enemies are put under his feet.

With this, the final subjugation of all his enemies is designated as the actual goal of his royal regiment, which will begin with his future from heaven. This regiment is to be regarded as completed only when also the last enemy, death, will be abolished. Before that, of course, there can be no question of handing over his kingdom to the Father, who has put everything under his feet. This use of the term end has many things to tell us. First of all, that the divine concept of the end is essentially different from what we humans commonly understand by an end.

In our imagination, the completion of the activity or the state, the end of which is spoken of, prevails. Here, this is obviously not the case. Rather, here, where the "end" is spoken of, wide views open up to us into unimagined depths and heights of divine activities for the achievement of the goals decided in his son with his whole universe.

The thought of a cessation of certain conditions and relations cannot be eliminated, but it is by no means the decisive thought. The meaning of the goal, the yield of the preceding times dominates the expression. Then even the simplest reader of the Scriptures will recognize that this end has nothing, but nothing at all, to do with the so popular idea of the "end of the world" or "end of the world", which is commonly thought to be simultaneous with the future of the Lord Jesus "to the Last Judgment", as one likes to express it.

Here we see quite clearly that the future of the Lord marks an unmistakable beginning in the grand style for the setting in of forces of revival in mankind fallen prey to death, which first prove themselves in those who belong to him as members of his body. Only afterwards, and very long after that, the "end", which is, however, in its part only rightly again a *new beginning*.

"When he shall have done away (destroyed) all rule, authority and power." This, then, is the expressed purpose of his kingship, which begins with his return from heaven. Just as the whole of the present eon serves to gather and prepare for him from all the peoples of the earth - while his chosen people Israel are being judged by blindness - a congregation whose expressed calling is to suffer with him now and then to reign with him when he comes. Thus without interruption the coming age joins the present one. What is being prepared today will then come to practical, worldwide execution.

But now all enlightened children of God who are versed in the word of prophecy know that the gathering and completion of the congregation from the nations will first be followed by the restoration of Israel as God's proprietary people and as a royal priesthood among the nations of the earth.

So you can see right at the beginning how infinitely wide the horizon is, which the word "end" encloses. For first all that God has spoken through the mouth of all His holy prophets from the world concerning Israel's national and spiritual rebirth must be fulfilled.

But there is so much of it that some serious, deep-thinking interpreters have believed that the 1000 years given in Revelation may well describe the minimum extent of the great time of blessing, but certainly not the extreme measure of time for what good God has promised His people and all nations through the renewed Israel.

We subscribe to such a view because of the fact that the Scriptures reveal something similar to us regarding the sufferings and tribulations for Israel.

By the prophet Jeremiah (29, 10) seventy years had been clearly determined for the duration of the captivity in Babylon, and directly following it it was said: so I will visit you and carry out my good word, that I will bring you back to this place. At that time God exactly kept this date, but nevertheless a repeated extension of the judgments and visitations over his unbelieving, but nevertheless beloved people took place.

It is revealed to Daniel that seventy weeks (of years) are appointed over his people and his holy city, so that the transgression will be blotted out and eternal righteousness will be brought forth.

Of this date, too, sixty-nine weeks have undoubtedly been fulfilled; the seventieth, as we have tried to prove in another place ("Der Prophet Daniel von E. F. Ströter, Kap. 9), is yet to be fulfilled as only in the time of the antichristian tribulation.

In between, God has known how to interpose a passage of time, the measure of which no one can or should calculate precisely, as the Master properly explained to the disciples in response to their question about the restoration of the Kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6, 7), and as this serves the purpose of calling, gathering and preparing the present believing community from all nations (Acts 15:14).

These are postponements which our God has brought about without having violated or disregarded his clearly stated dates in any way. One may well say how much more God will understand to extend the time of blessing promised to Israel without violating the thousand-year deadline at all.

For example, it is written: And 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). There God sets the standard for Himself and His actions in grace, according to which He wants to prove Himself.

In Isaiah 54, 7. 8 it says even more clearly about the measure of time: I have left you for a little moment, but with great mercy I will gather you. In overflowing anger I have hidden my face from you for a moment, but with everlasting mercy I will have mercy on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer.

If God calls the long, anxious millennia, when he kept his face hidden from Israel, "a moment", how will he then be able to exhaust in a single short millennium everything that makes his heart flutter in grace and mercy towards Israel, whom he has always loved.

Also events belong to this period, as they are announced in Isaiah 2 and Micah 4, that whole peoples and great nations will come to Jerusalem to be instructed by the Messiah of Israel, will receive completely new laws and arbitration decisions from him, will abolish war and will accept and implement a completely new order of states and peoples. These are all things that can only be forced into the

framework of short periods of time, but which will undoubtedly require centuries, if not millennia, to prove themselves.

All these are world-historical movements, which have no other goal than to put the regiment and the rule under heaven into the hands of the people of the saints of the Most High, so that the scripture would be fulfilled: Let us reign with, and we will reign with (2.Tim. 2, 12; Dan. 7, 27). They lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years Rev. 20:4.

From this it follows without constraint that the next goal for the display of divine power and glory to His own, be it the church, be it the pardoned and restored Israel, cannot yet be the elimination of all rule, authority and power, but first of all the establishment of the ruined tabernacle of David, the messianic kingdom of Jesus, who alone has the right to the throne of His father David and who will be king over the house of Jacob for the ages determined for it, be it a thousand or several thousand years (Acts. 15,16; Luk. 1.32.33).

One must not think to be able to shorten or to limit here, because these will be the times, to which the word of the prophecy has put off the heir of the promise since all this time, times, in which he, because he is the son of man, shall have all judgment in his hands and shall feed the nations with an iron scepter, as potter's vessels break them. He will also, through the then redeemed and sanctified people of his choice, bestow upon them the blessings already promised to Abraham. They will rightly be called times of the Son of Man, when the course of world events will no longer be dominated by the spirit from the abyss, by the father of lies, the murderer from the beginning, but when the nations will commit themselves to the Lord and let themselves be called by the name of Jacob.

Is not the great God obligated to his anointed one to prove before the eyes of all the peoples of the earth that he is in truth the best lawgiver, regent, judge and lord for a fallen, lost race of mortal men on this earth? Has God not bound himself, after all the world has gone bankrupt with its own machinations, to prove now that he has ordained a man who is better versed in the management of all the world's affairs than all the previous great and mighty ones of the earth, used and driven by the princes and rulers of darkness and wickedness?

Will it not and must it not come to pass that it be fulfilled which is written in Isaiah 33:22, Jehovah is our judge, Jehovah is our master, Jehovah is our king; he shall save us?

All talk that it is unworthy of the heavenly Lord that you want to degrade Him to a political ruler on this earth is irrelevant. Why not leave it to the great God to decide what is worthy of Him.

But he who believes the history of Israel according to the Scriptures knows that Jehovah indeed did not consider it unworthy of Him to be lawgiver, judge and king to a very sinful, perverse and obstinate people of mortal men on this earth, and that He was very displeased when Israel asked for a king such as the Gentiles have, because He suffices as such. And with good reason.

That it should mean a higher degree of spirituality if one does not want to believe that our God in Christ, the Jehovah of the Old Covenant, wants to keep it that way also in future times, we are not able to understand. On the contrary, we consider it very unspiritual not to believe God on his simple word without fiddling with it.

And how real and genuinely human all these intentions of God are, is also evident from the promises that God gave especially to his Israel for that future time of restoration in the promised land.

There it says Ezk 36, 26-29: I will give you a new heart and a new spirit; I will take away the stony heart from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my spirit within you and make you such people as will walk in my statutes and observe and do my judgments. And ye shall dwell in the land which I gave unto your fathers, and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. And I will cleanse

you from all your uncleannesses, and will call for the grain, and make it plentiful, and will not send you famine.

There is not the slightest doubt that our God can make his church, raised with Christ and transferred with him to heavenly regions, very glorious and happy there. But it is reprehensible unbelief not to take those promises given to Israel in their simple literal sense and to believe them, but to deny that in his Father's house are many dwellings and that he has gone to prepare a place for us there. Both promises are equally divine and reliable.

Just let Israel be a people from heaven and do not refuse God to give them the promised land, just as He said. This is the right way of the Holy Spirit to take God's word and let it stand. The popular "spiritualizations" are quite unspiritual. And everything that God has intended for His people serves the great purpose: "They shall be my glory, my joy, my praise and my honor among all the peoples of the earth, who shall hear of all the good that I do to them, and they shall be afraid and tremble because of all the good and because of all the peace that I will give to her, Jerusalem (Jer. 33. 9).

And Zeph. 3, 19. 20: Behold, I will in that day subdue all your tormentors, and will help the limping, and gather the outcast, and will make them praise and honor in all the countries of their reproach. In that day will I bring you, and in that day will I gather you. For I will make you a name and a praise among all the nations of the earth, when I shall turn your captivity before your eyes, saith Jehovah. These are the things that signify the sanctification of his name, which Israel has desecrated among the Gentiles, and which God will sanctify when he does to them according to all that he has spoken (Ezek. 36:20ff.). This is what Jesus taught his Jewish disciples to pray: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. All this must and will happen in orderly sequence, without haste and rashness, before the "end" can come, which is spoken of here.

For this end means the abolition of all rule, authority and power, but not their establishment, testing, consolidation, so that the Scriptures would be fulfilled.

Now, however, we must not overlook a clear hint given to us in the Word of God about the character of the powers, dominions and authorities whose elimination is first envisaged. First and foremost, we have to think of hostile powers, as they are still involved in the administration and management of world affairs, politics and spiritual currents in the present age, which give the present course of time its evil character. This is very clear from Hebr. 2, 5: For it is not angels that he has put in charge of the world to come, of which we speak. That these angels are mainly dark and hostile to God is clear from Eph. 2, 2; 6, 12. In Dan. 10, 20 to 11, 1 good angelic spirits are also meant.

But the scripture only assigns Satan the strange title: Prince and God of this world! This is not by chance. It clearly indicates that the elimination of all dominion is primarily about the elimination of satanic, God-hostile power and authority. Rev. 20, 1 also refers to this: "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he took hold of the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut up and sealed it upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, until the thousand years were fulfilled.

With these words, however, the final elimination of this satanic power of seduction is not yet pronounced; rather, it is in prospect that Satan will be let loose again after a thousand years, that he will succeed in stirring up whole masses of armies, called Gog and Magog, to fight against the army camp of the saints and the beloved city, Jerusalem, whereupon only then his final fall into the lake of fire and brimstone will take place (Rev. 20:7-10).

Hebr. 1 and 2 clearly show that the reign of the angels for the future world, i.e. the inhabited earth, will be replaced by the reign of the Son and thus of His saints and redeemed, of which it is definitely said: "Now we do not yet see all things subjected to Him, but we see Jesus already (in faith) crowned

with honor and glory because of His suffering of death; and furthermore it is said of Him that He has thereby put a stop to him who has the power of death, that is the devil. These are all very clear points of contact with the explanations that Paul is allowed to give us in 1 Corinthians 15. They are the same basic features of the great change, which will be carried out in the matter of world domination at the return of the Risen Lord from heaven.

Thus it results that the installation of the Son and the chosen sons of God into the dominion at the same time also means the elimination of all other power. With the one, the other happens.

There is no need for special proof to make understandable that all these world-historical processes will require significant periods of time for their due unfolding. Why should also the great eternal God, i.e. the God of the ages, or according to Dan. 7, 9 the high aged, be in a hurry to cut short the practical presentation of his wisdom, power, majesty and love to the glorious Son of Man? After all, he created the ages through the Son and for the Son.

So then, let them fulfill their purpose and, in their orderly course, proclaim to the astonished humanity awakening from centuries of bondage the virtues of Him who is the most beautiful among the children of men, who was the hope of Israel and the longing of the nations in the long, anxious time of the authorities of darkness.

As in a broad, deep river, they are to take in and let flow out to the ends of the earth all that is hidden and locked up in Christ Jesus our Lord in the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

If the first Adam, and with him and through him Satan, the god of this world, had his day lasting thousands of years, why should the day of the Son of Man have a lesser extension? No one need fear that the coming ages will be boring for him. For in Christ Jesus the fullness of God dwells bodily.

And if the old earth and the old heaven already proclaim the glory of God, how much more will this have its validity when the One seated on the throne now sets about redeeming His word: Behold, I make all things new! We are waiting for a new heaven and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

But what is the special meaning of the complete abolition of *all* rule, authority and power, also of the good, perfect authorities and orders? Is it really possible to think of such an abolition of all authoritative organization of life on earth and in heaven? Would this not bring a relapse into chaotic conditions and boundless confusion? And does it not clearly say in Daniel: His kingdom is an eternal kingdom, and all powers will serve and obey him? And Ps. 145, 13 it says: Your kingdom is a kingdom for all eternity, and your dominion extends to all generations. These are certainly noteworthy objections that we must duly address.

One could certainly get the idea from 1 Cor. 15, 25.26 that the words about the abolition of every dominion are only about the elimination of the God-hostile, God-opposing dominions, powers and rulers, especially since death is especially named as the last enemy that is abolished.

We are dealing here at the same time with two other very definite statements which leave no room for the assumption that only the hostile reigns are to cease completely. For in v. 24 it is clearly stated that in the end Christ will return to the Father the kingdom or kingship that the Father had given to Him. This is confirmed in v. 28: When all things shall be subject unto him, then shall the Son also submit himself unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

Whatever we have to think under the return of the kingly rule on the part of the son to the father, it comes thereby in any case to a quite certain conclusion and then ceases to exist. That this does not happen because the son has not proven himself as a ruler does not need any proof. The opposite is the case. His royal rule in the whole wide range of its glorious existence was so perfect, so successful, that there is no longer any need for such a regiment.

It is the only possible and worthy interpretation of the fact revealed here of the return of the kingly rule to him who has promised it for millennia, in the fullness of times effectively transferred to the chosen one to the tremendous end of the complete restoration of the harmony between creator and creature disturbed for millennia, even for eons, and more than that, to the thoroughgoing all-reconciliation of heaven and earth. With the achievement of this goal the continuance of his ruling power as such becomes irrelevant and may cease. This will become clearer to us from the following considerations.

If we first ask why authority, rule and force have become necessary and indispensable, there can only be one answer: through sin. For if, for example, all people were like Jesus Christ, why would there be a need for laws, police and rulers? The rulers are not there to scare the righteous but the evil (Rom. 13:3).

Rom. 5, 20 says: The law came along, so that sin would become all the more powerful, or the measure of sins would become full. In a sinless and selfless humanity, which would only be driven by the love of God, which would possess a perfect knowledge of his holy, good will, enlightened by his spirit, there would simply be no occupation for authorities, rulers and rulers.

This line is also the key to God's delicious arrangement with the church in Christ Jesus, that it is not under law but under grace. Therefore, the believers are intensively warned not to deal with law, ordinances, regulations, etc., because this only leads to the knowledge of sin and only causes anger. Rather, they should take into account the fact that grace, which brings salvation to all people, disciplines us to deny the ungodly nature and worldly lusts and to realize a prudent, righteous and godly way of life.

In the first great world period, from the Fall to the judgment of the flood, humankind lived without governments and authorities. Violence and abominations filled the earth. Except for eight souls mankind had to be exterminated. After the flood tyrants arise, it comes to the formation of empires, states and nations. Organized paganism is formed. While God lets the nations go their own ways, he takes his chosen people into the strict school of the law, in which quite glorious, faithful servants, but no sons are formed.

Sin, however, reigns with terrible power and tyranny, culminating under the law in the rejection of the Son of God sent from heaven by the law-abiding chief priests and elders of Israel. The proof is given that mankind without law and authority as well as under the law and under divine order is equally damnable, lacking the glory of God.

Now God begins a completely new, the regiment of saving grace in the election, gathering and preparation by grace alone, without the intervention of the law, without strict organization, without superiors and subordinates, without rulers and servants, a community of believers who are baptized into one body by the Spirit, brought to perfect unity in and with his Christ. A great example to the principalities and powers in the heavenly regions of the manifold wisdom of God, who probably never thought of such a possibility (Eph. 3, 10).

It is the expressed, purposeful intention of God to transform his elect into the image of his Son, so that he is the firstborn among many brothers. At the same time, however, he is also the firstborn before all creatures, and thereby the second and last Adam, i.e. the head of a completely new humanity to be formed into his image.

That means, what he first accomplishes in his church is authoritative and exemplary for the last great goals of God with his whole, lost mankind. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. What is corrupted by the sin of the One is perfectly outweighed and outweighed by the righteousness of the One. For where sin has become powerful, grace has become more abundant. (Rom. 5, 17-21).

Have not all our well-meaning attempts to re-establish the law in the church of God failed thoroughly? And how we have sinned against the body of Christ with the introduction of hierarchical authorities. How little has one understood what the Lord already told his disciples in Mk. 10, 42.43: "You know that those who rule the nations treat them lordly and their great ones exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you. But whoever wants to be great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever wants to be the greatest among you, let him be the servant of all.

Have we not, under the certainly sincere delusion of creating order in matters of doctrine and administration, created the greatest disorder imaginable? The delusion of promoting unity has resulted in the greatest disunity and disorganization. Has not God turned our supposed wisdom into folly? But he is right, and his plan succeeds under all human folly. He pursues his goal with sovereign calm. And the Son will present His church according to His promise, glorious, without spot or wrinkle or anything (Eph 5:27).

In this lies at the same time the pattern and the full guarantee for the success of what he has ultimately undertaken with all mankind and creation according to the good pleasure of his will and according to the counsel of God from eternity, namely to bring all things under one head, which are in heaven and on earth (Eph. 1, 10).

What a wonderful light falls from here on the meaning and position of the church in the great divine program for the final reconciliation of the world. From here it becomes understandable why the church is assigned its place at his side in Col. 1, 18, exactly where it says that it was considered good that not only all fullness should dwell in him, but that all things through him should be reconciled to himself, so that he might bring peace through the blood of his cross to all things in heaven and on earth, to the whole universe. For all things were created in him, things in heaven and things on earth, visible and invisible, thrones or dominions, principalities or powers, and he is before all, and all things consist in him.

There the church appears next to him not only as a splendid ornament, also not only as the richest booty and triumphant result of his soul struggle of Gethsemane and Golgotha, but as the marvelous, completed organ of the glorious head beyond all measure, to whom finally through his body the whole universe shall and will be subjected and incorporated.

And in the same way, as the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead (by whom we are transformed into His image from clarity to clarity) is for us today the personal pledge, the guarantee of perfection in His image, (for the transfiguration of our corporeality into the likeness of his glorious spiritual corporeality), so in the wider context the church glorified with him and in him is the pledge and guarantee that he will bring forth all that has been begun in us with the whole creation, of which we are the firstfruits.

The church is not only saved from the authority and power of sin, darkness and death, under which it was by nature, as well as the rest of mankind: The life, growth and perfection of the church are in no way dependent on any authority, force, rule or power. It is subject only to the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, the perfect law of freedom, of complete love, which excludes all fear. Therefore, the members of his body are never called his subjects, even though they love and acknowledge him as their Lord and Master in willing obedience, in the discipline of the Spirit of grace.

If, therefore, our Lord and Head succeeds in eliminating forever from the whole of mankind and the angelic world sin, indignation, rebellion and enmity, then, in the whole realm of the creation thus redeemed, every necessity for the existence and use of dominion, power or force for the ordering and maintenance of the whole of the universe is removed and abolished.

To come back to the mentioned objection that it is written that the kingdom of the Messiah is determined for all eons, it will be sufficient to point out that we have to correct our unbiblical,

philosophical ideas of the meaning of the eons. According to the Scriptures, the eons are creations by the Son and for the Son, all of which have had a beginning and will also have an end. What kind of order of times will be introduced then, we can confidently leave to him who called the eons and used them for the unfolding of the glories of the Son.

If the son, to whom they are subject, has solved the task given to him by the father to the satisfaction, if every power, dominion and authority is done away with, every enemy subdued, also death abolished, then also the eons are abolished, because they have fulfilled their purpose. So that word of the kingdom of the anointed one rightly remains, only it gets another than the conventional, incomprehensible, unfounded meaning. (Further information about this in my writing: "What does the scripture understand by eternity.")

2. death dismissed as the last enemy

A short succinct word, but immensely rich in content. First of all, it should be noted that it thoroughly clears up with refreshing clarity the philosophical lie that death is a true friend of mankind, hence the name "Friend Hein". That the bodily death can be regarded under certain circumstances as a kind of liberation or relief of a heavy, almost unbearable lot full of terrible pain etc., is to be admitted. But this is true only under certain conditions, e.g. if Christ has become our life, then dying is gain. Certainly not in the sense that it would bring us real redemption, but only in such a way that through the triumph of the one who has taken away death's power, we are also able to triumph over it, because it only has to bring us into a more intimate communion with his conqueror.

Therefore Paul, who was allowed to call dying a gain, emphasizes with great determination: Rather than being unclothed, be clothed over, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life (2 Cor. 5:4).

No, the scripture remains right under all circumstances against all deception of darkness and philosophy; death is an enemy of life. Therefore, there is no talk of a complete triumph of the Prince of Life in the whole wide creation until the last enemy, death, will be completely abolished. And this is what this word gives us in certain prospect. What does it want to tell us?

One may think of the content of this promise as one likes, one thing is quite undeniable: it can never be considered fulfilled as long as somewhere in the whole wide area of the Lord Jesus' reign any other enemy exists as such or has his being.

This needs no proof even with the simplest reader of the Scriptures. It is so self-evident that every enmity in heaven and on earth and under the earth must first be eliminated before this promise can be considered fulfilled.

So it is quite certain that all and any enmity against the Lord and His anointed will be finally removed from the world, because the time will come when there will be no more devil, adversary, Satan, dragon, nor any other being in which any trace of enmity against God and Christ would be left. Otherwise it can never be said that death is the last enemy to be abolished. This is also confirmed in the most definite way by that last word of Scripture that tells us about the fate and judgment of Satan: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire, where the beast is, and the false prophet; and they shall be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:10).

This is the last information given to us in the Scriptures about the whereabouts of the devil after his last deed of seduction among the people of the millennial eon. There we find him quite clearly in the power of death, whose power he had had up to now. For it is expressly said of the lake of fire and brimstone that this is the second death (Rev. 20:14). Thus the righteous judgment of God has reached him. He, the murderer from the beginning, is now a prey of death, which was in his power before, by which he caused unmeasured suffering in the wide creation. He must now taste it, and that in the most bitter, sharpest form.

Whatever one may think of the second death, this much is certain: for Satan it means the most terrible humiliation and crushing that could befall him. It undoubtedly reveals his complete bankruptcy, his vain conceit and pride against the almighty God and his anointed one together with his saints. His cunning and lies, his treacherous plots have now come to an end forever; he has become a mortal, a dead man, a completely powerless and helpless one.

With it every possibility of a continuance of his regiment based on lie and darkness over other spirits is dismissed forever. It has become obvious before all intelligences of all levels and degrees that the rule of lies and darkness has an end forever, it has been judged, its nullity has been unsparingly exposed and put into the light.

Thereby, furthermore, all lie, which had its origin in him, is made harmless forever - the father of the lie a prey of the second death! Who once seduced mankind with the lie: You will by no means die of death, now yourselves a victim of the inexorable last enemy, who, under the indescribable triumph of all truth powers, of all light powers, will pounce on him, will render him harmless forever, who has used him in unlimited, never to be satiated murderous lust through eons to corrupt God's creatures. This is divine, holy justice, about which heaven will rejoice and the whole earth will exult.

What does this mean now? Is it biblically conceived to speak now of an imperishable, firmly established, unshakable kingdom of hell, which shall never perish, but endlessly continue, and in which all incorrigible wicked, men and angels, shall be under the cruel rule of Satan without end?

Where are the words of God like Eph. 5, 13: All these (the unfruitful, shameful works of darkness) will be revealed when they are punished by the light; for all that is revealed is light! Are these divine principles in His procedure with the works of darkness, when its hour of being judged by the light of incorruptible truth and drawn to the unsparing light of publicity has come? Can the result here be different from what the apostle so clearly states there?

What experiences do all the saints have in this area? What happens to us, the children of nature's wrath, the subjects of darkness, when we come into the light and judgment of truth with all our bondages of sin, lies, shame, cruelty, defiance, arrogance, in short, with all the works of darkness within us?

Doesn't the faithful God make his word come true? Do we not then become free, free and free, overwhelmed by the omnipotence of his redeeming grace and love? And does it make any difference how long we had been in such a cruel bondage, or how often we had shamelessly rejected the seeking, wooing grace, when we finally came to the light, i.e. into the judgment?

Has it not always come true what the Master said to the Pharisee: "Many sins are forgiven her, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, he loves little (Luk 7:47). But it has always proved delicious: what was revealed in us became light, our deepest bondages became indescribable inner freedoms, we went from the sorriest slavery to the glory of the freedom of sons of God. Does our God have two weights and measures in judgment when the hour has come?

But could not the second death, the lake of fire, into which the devil is thrown, mean his and his incorrigible comrades' final destruction? We can well understand if one might rather give room to such a conception than to the quite unbearable, because unfounded, theory, built on fundamental error, of an endless hell realm of darkness under Satan's scepter, in never-ending open rebellion against the kingdom of light.

It may also be admitted that with the final annihilation the way would be wider open for a reconciliation of the whole universe, even if only limited, than is possible with the prevailing church doctrine of the endless kingdom of hell.

But, as we have already expressed, we cannot recognize this assumption for one which does full justice to all Scripture. It entails insoluble difficulties and ultimately means a precarious failure of either the divine omniscience or the divine omnipotence or the holy will of love of God against all his works. It presupposes a quite intolerable dualism, an insoluble inner opposition in the very nature of God.

For the Scriptures testify that God is aware of all His works from the beginning. So God must have reckoned with all the possibilities that would arise from the emergence of evil in His world.

Furthermore, it testifies that everything in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, principalities and powers, are not only created in the Son, but also through him and for him. If the omnipotence and love of God does not succeed in completely and truly handing over everything created to the Son, then a failure of the divine original thought of determining everything for the Son cannot be avoided.

This cannot be reconciled with a harmonious conception of the God of Scripture. It makes no difference whether the divine enterprise fails so that the great multitude finally becomes a prey of the devil, of endless hell, or a prey of final annihilation. The fiasco of God remains the same in both cases

The gospel of the final all-reconciliation offers the only way out of all difficulties, whereby all scripture, even the most serious, of death, perdition and hell comes into its own, and God's punishing justice and holiness remains untouched in the whole scope of the biblical statements about it, and nevertheless, or just through it, the all-powerful love of God celebrates its perfect triumphs over all enmity, lies, death and darkness.

But if the second death does not mean annihilation, what then? We meet the expression only in the revelation and that without an explanation would be even tried there, except the comparison with the lake of fire. First in the epistle K. 2, 11: Whoever overcomes shall not be harmed by the second death. This means that the same brings suffering. It is implied in the expression, although not openly stated, that this suffering should be more severe than that of the first death.

Then we find it again in K. 20, 6: Over these (who have part in the first resurrection) the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and Christ and reign with him for a thousand years. From this it seems that the second death has power and may threaten those who will not participate in the first resurrection, but in later resurrections, as they are foreseen in the Scriptures. The sodomites, for example, are clearly promised to return to their former state; likewise the inhabitants of Samaria as well as those of Jerusalem (Ezek 16:55). If these words are to be taken in their simple sense, they can only mean a return to natural, earthly life, such as happened to a Lazarus. These have undoubtedly died again, i.e. for the second time. However, this second dying is not synonymous with the second death, although a certain correspondence cannot be denied.

In any case, we may well be assured that great multitudes of men, like Sodom and Gomorrah, will be raised from the first death to a second continued life in the flesh: for those raisings of the dead by the Lord and his disciples certainly have Messianic significance, are patterns of what will happen on a grand scale at and after the Lord's return.

It is therefore quite obvious that a second death as an aggravation of the punishment may well be applied to those on whom even their recovery from the first death will not have had the hoped-for effect.

This would also make it easier to explain what the Lord meant when He said to the cities by the Sea of Galilee: "It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon on the last day than for you" (Mat. 11:22, 24).

Full justice would also require that all those uncounted generations, to whom God never showed or let show his salvation during their lifetime, before their first death, would nevertheless be put into the same position by raising the dead, to decide in the body for or against Christ as all other mortals.

The next mention of the second death is in K. 20, 10, where the term is not used, but the matter appears under another name: The devil was thrown into the lake of fire, where the beast is and the false prophet, and they are tormented day and night, from eternity to eternity.

Since in the passage that follows the second death is also called the lake of fire (v 14), it is best to consider the two words together here.

First of all, we see that the second death, the lake of fire, is not to be regarded as annihilation; for after a thousand years' stay in the lake of fire, the beast and the false prophet are still in it and, together with the devil who is now with them, will be subjected to the judgment of terrible torment for eternity.

At the same time, it is immediately clear that we are dealing with the fire that Jesus speaks of in Mat. 25:41: Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Next to this we have the apostolic statements about the eternal fire, which are found in Judg. 7 and 2. Pet. 2, 6 and in which the judgment by fire, which hit Sodom and Gomorrah, is established as a biblical example for what we have to understand by this fire.

From this compilation, based on internal consistency of the designations in question, the following follows:

1. From the comparison of Jude 7 with 2 Petr 2, 6 with Ezk 16, 55 it is clear that the eternal fire is by no means to be thought of as endless. For Sodom and Gomorrah will be restored to their former state. If this can happen with them, then also with other creatures in the same judgment, especially since it is declared that those cities are examples for others.
2. Mat. 25:46 shows just as clearly that the fire prepared for the devil and his angels can by no means be a purposeless, fruitless and inconclusive torment and chastisement. The word translated there as chastisement means sharp, painful, but purposeful chastisement (*kolasis*) calculated for success. In the word there is neither the concept of annihilation nor that of hopelessness, but obviously that of the eventual, though immensely painful, correction.

Thus, all conventional ideas about the character and meaning of the eternal fire, that is, the second death, which is equal to it, are to be rejected as baseless, as determined as the idea of finite destruction of the wicked, the devil and his angels.

It remains to consider the passage in which something very strange is said about the lake of fire. It is about Rev. 20, 13, 14: And death and the realm of the dead were thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death. Immediately before it had been said: And the sea gave up the dead which were therein, and death and the realm of the dead gave up the dead which were therein: and they were judged every man according to their works. So there takes place a, as it seems, complete emptying of all containers of death, the sea and the underworld, the actual biblical Hades (Hebr. Sheol; in German: grave). All graves are opened, all dead are called out, i.e. given back to the natural life, be it good or bad, and then all who are not found worthy of the entrance to life are handed over to the second death, the lake of fire.

This is the simple, vivid description of the facts. The whole process is probably nothing else than what the Lord prophesied Joh. 5, 28. 29: The hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear his voice, and those who have done good will come forth to the resurrection of life, but those who have done evil will come forth to the resurrection of judgment.

This is probably the same thing Paul had in mind when he testified before Felix, the governor: ...and have hope in God, for which they themselves (his accusers) also wait, that in the future there will be the resurrection of the dead, both of the righteous and the unrighteous. (Acts 24:15). In this apostolic word it is noteworthy that not only the resurrection of the righteous, but also that of the unrighteous means hope to God for Paul, while according to the conventional understanding and teaching the resurrection of the unrighteous would mean hopelessness. Just as it does not make sense why God should raise the wicked at all, if they are already in the place of torment, in the endless hell of fire, immediately after their death.

Likewise, it is not clear why the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon, of Sodom and Gomorrah, could be more comfortable on that day of the Son of Man than those of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, when the lot of all those who have died in unbelief and godlessness is the endless torment of hell.

Let us keep in mind that all those cities of Israel together with their unbelieving inhabitants, who in vain saw the salvation of God appear among them, only make up a part of the people that the prophets repeatedly compare with Sodom and Gomorrah (Isa. 1, 10; Jer. 23, 14; Klagel. 4, 6; Rev. 11, 8), but to whom the divine promise is certain: All Israel will be saved; for God has shut them all up in unbelief, that He may have mercy on all (Rom. 11, 26. 32).

Israel's greatest prophet presents the daughters of Jerusalem, over whom he wept and lamented, with the certain prospect: "You will not see me from now on until you say: Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord (Mat. 23:39).

This is also confirmed by Revelation 1:7: "Every eye shall see him, even they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall beat their breasts because of him. But they can only do that when they have come out of their graves and will look at him Zech. 12, 10-14.

From this latter prophetic word, which is apparently briefly summarized in Rev. 1:7, it is sufficiently evident that the lamentation in prospect is not one of despair, but occurs as a result of the outpouring of the Spirit of grace and prayer upon the house of David and the citizens of Jerusalem.

These are contexts of biblical expositions on this great serious subject, which show no break, no gap, and from which it is clear, when Scripture alone is compared and explained, that even the resurrection of judgment can never bear the character of hopelessness which the conventional doctrine of the Church has impressed upon it since the days of Augustine.

If we now go back to the already briefly discussed scriptural statement, according to which death is the last enemy to be abolished, it follows that all other enmity in the whole wide universe among all kinds of visible and invisible beings must first have been eliminated, abolished, before death can take its turn. But it is clearly proven that the heads of all hostility, the leaders of all rebellion and indignation against God and Christ have found their judgment in the other death, in the lake of fire. But this lake of fire unmistakably bears the predicate "death", "second death".

For this purpose it has become clear to us that all human graves have found their complete emptying according to the word of the Lord, and that no other dead were present than those who were just thrown into the second death, which the last in the Scriptures mentioned sharpest form of the judgment met, like the devil and his angels, for whom this fire was prepared. From this, even the simplest reader can clearly see that that emptying of the realm of the dead, the contents of which fell to the lake of fire for perhaps the greatest part, cannot possibly be regarded as the abolition of death. Because the effectiveness of this second death experiences only by the emptying of the graves (resurrection, as we saw), a significant extension.

Nor can it be said that in all those who fall into the second death, the hostile attitude and opinion against God has already been eliminated by their entry into the state of the other death. In the case

of the beast and the false prophet, who had already been in the lake of fire for a thousand years when Satan was thrown in with them, it is well shown that such an assumption is possible.

It is also clearly stated about Satan and his angels and instruments of satanic destruction that they will be tormented day and night from eternity to eternity, thus undoubtedly through several eons.

However, it should be noted that in Scripture the term eon is sometimes used of relatively short periods of time. For example, Jonah prays from the belly of the sea monster: "I sank down to the bottom of the mountains, the earth was locked behind me forever (here the Hebrew word for eon = olam) (Jon. 2, 7). In reality his death captivity lasted only three days and nights. And if one wants to claim that he thought of his final exit from this life, then it still remains that the believing prophet could not have thought further than until the raising from the dead. The immediately following words of his prayer give more credence to the assumption that he nevertheless counted on an imminent salvation when he says: "Then you, Lord, my God, have brought my life out of destruction" v. 7b. In common parlance, we are also familiar with the expression: it seemed like an eternity to me, and so on.

The basic conception of the word used here seems to be that of the unforeseeable, no matter how long or short the real period of time that is described with it. (For more details, see the author's tract: What does the Scripture understand by eternity?)

Thus it is certain that the subjugation of Satan and his angels, the final abolition of his hostile, rebellious regiment in heaven and on earth, is a fait accompli in that he comes with all his followers into the second death, as one completely judged, overcome, henceforth quite harmless, a powerless prey of death. With this, however, nothing is yet established about his inner transformation from an enemy of God into a willing worshipper and restored "Son of God" as he was in the beginning (Ezk 28, 12-14).

Before we continue to deal with this question, we should briefly refer to a prophecy in the book of Psalms (82, 6. 7), in which highly important features of divine thoughts of judgment and grace can be recognized, which could be applied here: I have said, you are gods (elohim) and all at once children of the Most High. But you will die like men and fall like one of the princes. The main question is who is to be understood by those addressed as "elohim", whether mere men or higher, i.e. angelic beings, or, as it seems, both.

So the question is whether it is permissible to see behind the human judges so seriously threatened by God in this Psalm, who judged unjustly and looked at the person of the guilty (so that the foundations of the country -the earth?- were shaken), other beings to whom in world affairs a high authority and responsibility is assigned by God Himself, and who have to give account for it to God.

Examples that higher beings from the angelic world are seen and understood behind human personalities in the scriptures can be found in sufficient number to justify such a view. We point to Isa. 14, 3ff, where in the prophetic field of vision behind the king of Babylon the figure of Lucifer fallen from heaven is undoubtedly to be recognized; because what is said about him in v. 12-14 does not fit to a merely human monarch. The same applies to the moving description in Ezk. 28, 12ff. about the fall of the anointed, shielding cherub, by which probably not only the king of Tyre can be meant, but the one whom the scripture calls the prince and God of this world.

A very similar procedure is practiced by the Spirit of Prophecy with a number of typical personalities who point to Christ as to the Antichrist.

Likewise, light is shed on this view in Dan. 10, where we are shown very graphically how angelic princes have a large part in the administration of world politics.

If we can read this word of the Psalm in such a way that God does not only address human judges but at the same time the higher powers, to whom according to Eph. 2, 2 the gears of the present world system are subordinated, then his words, especially his sentence, get a very strange meaning, which we must not disregard here, especially since the result corresponds with the language of Isaiah and Ezekiel in the two passages mentioned.

This judgment is: I have said: you are gods and all at once sons of the Most High; and yet you shall die like men and fall like one of the princes! Such a sentence does not want to say very much with men. But if it is directed against the one who has had the power of death and has made murderous use of it through thousands of years, then it gets a completely different weight.

But now also in Isaiah 14, 15ff. the word of the Lord turns with mockery and scorn to the presumptuous morning star, the prince of the angels, who had resolved, I will ascend to heaven and exalt my throne above the stars of God...like the Most High!- and says to him: Yes, to Sheol you descend, into the deepest pit!

And the saying to the king of Tyre is (Ezek. 28, 17.18): I cast you to the earth (Rev.12, 9) and made you a spectacle before the kings...I caused fire to come out of you, which consumed you, and I turned you to ashes in the sight of all who see you.

Our dogmatic difficulties arising from philosophical inferences that Satan can never die mean nothing in the face of such certain declarations of Scripture. They weigh less than nothing. If the word of God declares that even the murderer from the beginning shall be a prey to death and become ashes, then he will, let men say what they will.

And why should he not be able to do it? According to Scripture, he not only has the ability to use the corporeality of a lower creature, the serpent, for his purposes of seduction, but he could also take bodily possession of the person of the traitor, the child of perdition: Satan entered him (John 13:27).

In addition, the Scriptures let us expect that another son of perdition will come later, to whom Satan will give his power and his throne and great authority (Rev. 13:2). He will have to share the same fate with him, namely to be thrown into the lake of fire.

But if Satan, and his angels with him, can die like men, then they can also be raised from death like men. No valid objection can be raised against such a conclusion from the Scriptures.

But now the important question: What is the purpose of this second death, the lake of fire, in the divine procedure? Because this is certain from the outset: it is just as little purposeless and meaningless as the first, the death at all. This is already clear from the fact that it is called the second death, that the word of God attaches the same predicate to it as to the one that is called the wages of sin.

The Scriptures, however, are more chaste and reliable in giving names than we humans are. In it, the name always means the true essence. If we therefore want to conclude from the name the essence and the God-willed meaning of the second death, then no better way remains for us than to consider which service death has to perform in the divine rule with mankind.

It is superfluous and useless to try to get advice about it from any other source of cognition or knowledge. For what does all science and philosophy know to this day about the nature and meaning of death? It is and remains an impenetrable mystery to the created spirit. Only the spirit of truth can inform us about it from the infallible revelation of the written word.

There stand before our enlightened eye two irrefutable facts, which Scripture corroborates for us:

1. That death and sin belong together inseparably like cause and effect. Only through sin did death enter the world. But sin is undoubtedly Satan's work. He is the liar and the murderer from the beginning.
2. That the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. This is confirmed and explained by the fact that Christ was made sin by God, and thus by his death destroyed him who has the power of death, the devil. He is the propitiation, the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours alone, but also for those of the whole world, without any exception. For it was His good pleasure that all fullness should dwell in Him, and that all things through Him should be reconciled to Himself, by bringing peace through the blood of His cross, both things in heaven and things on earth (Col. 1:20).

But next to this is the other biblical fact, that the Scripture (God) has decided everything under sin, and thus under death. For this alone made it possible that the Son of God by His death, which He died for the sake of sin, completely destroyed the one who has the power of death, the devil; that He publicly put the rulers and powers in the pillory and triumphed over them on the cross (Col. 2, 15). Accordingly it says Hebr. 2, 9:.... that Christ by the grace of God tasted death for all and was crowned with glory and honor because of his suffering in death.

Now it is obvious that nevertheless his saints and believers are not only not spared dying, but the scripture clearly speaks of a fellowship of his sufferings, of becoming similar to his death for the elect. And Paul speaks in Phil. 1 of the fact that death meant gain to him, to whom Christ had become life.

There can be no doubt, then, that in the pedagogy of God, under certain circumstances, even death, that pronounced, declared enemy, has very important and valuable services to render, not only in the pedagogical but also in the judicial field.

We only remember the shocking judgment of Ananias and Sapphira, as well as the sharp judgment of the apostle in the name and power of the Lord Jesus on that brother in Corinth: to hand him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that the spirit would be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus (Cor. 5:5). Similarly, the judgment on Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom he handed over to Satan so that they would be chastened not to blaspheme anymore.

Is it quite unjustified and unfounded to conclude from this that in our God's way of education a similar chastening and correcting significance may also be ascribed to the second death? We do not think so. For no proof of the contrary can be found in Scripture itself. Everything that is taught about the either annihilating or finally hopelessly tormenting, purely purposelessly punishing significance of the second death is based on preconceived opinions that cannot be substantiated from Scripture. It is nothing but dogmatic assertion that the second death can never be annulled, that there can never be salvation from it.

On the other hand, we consider ourselves quite justified in the assumption that even the second death is no exception to God's other means of punishment and chastisement, but that it must also serve God's thoughts of salvation and restoration, but can never mean the insurmountable obstacle to God's eternal thoughts of love.

In doing so, everyone will recognize that nothing is thereby taken away from the horrors of this second death as such, but only the infinity first imputed to it by men, which elevates it to power and significance, which even effectively opposes the holy and perfect will of love of God in Christ Jesus, and finally subverts the expressed intention that all men shall be saved.

It is and remains terrible to fall into the hands of the living God. Because God is love, he is also a consuming fire. Therefore also the hell of fire is the last and speaking proof of the unfathomable

love of God, which goes to the utmost limits of death, ruin and damnation with his creatures, rather than that he would let them remain in sin, enmity and remoteness from God.

Consider calmly and soberly: According to the Scriptures, the devil has the power of death. But the same scripture shows unequivocally that there will also be a death for him, which will put an end to all his vaunted, false majesty and arrogated ruling power, as we have seen from Isaiah and Ezekiel. The second death is quite obviously not only not in his power, but we find him in its power, overcome and tormented by it. Who then has the power of the second death? Who disposes of it, determines it, makes use of it?

Can the second death of itself mean an anti-God power against which God's thoughts of love would have to fail? Is it conceivable that any being that God, in His holy love, must consign to the horrors and agonies of the second death would thus be completely and forever out of His realm? Such a being could never be helped by the almighty God?

And he himself prepared this fire for the devil and his angels! This preparation should ever have arisen from other motives than those of perfect wisdom, coupled with holy love and impeccable justice?

It should mean that God with consciousness has set an insurmountable barrier for ever to his salvation and love work? God, who wants all people to be saved and all to come to the knowledge of the truth, should have wanted that the execution of his own, well-considered will of love should never be possible for large amounts of creatures...! Can God also have two wills so opposed to each other? What would become of the one, holy, truthful God?!

It is not said that this is not God's fault, but only that of His unwilling, recalcitrant, incorrigible creatures, who effectively hindered the execution of God's holy will of love. This does not change the terrible dilemma, never cancels the unbearable dualism in the nature of God. For if God with premeditation created creatures that were capable of this, and saw beforehand that they would actually accomplish it, of which we naturally admit the possibility, then it was impossible for God to will at the same time and to substantiate it openly and with the clearest speech that all men should be saved. Then the most ghastly Calvinism is right, that God from all eternity predestined the greater part of his fallen creation to unchangeable, endless damnation. Then it is quite consistent to teach that there are little children in hell for a span!

Then also be completely honest, as Calvinism used to be, and stop proclaiming the universality of divine love intentions with a lost world. Because both at the same time can never be true or possible.

On the other hand, the gospel of God, which we advocate, of the final reconciliation of the whole universe under the one head Christ, means at the same time the reconciliation of the two great main schools of believing, evangelical theology. We hold with Calvinism the doctrine of *gratia irresistibilis* (irrevocable grace). Only we extend to all what he inconsistently confines to the elect. On the other hand, we hold just as sincerely to the *gratia universalis* (universally valid grace), which we do not oppose to Calvinism, but which we happily marry with the Calvinistic *gratia irresistibilis* to a harmonious, fruitful covenant, to the glory of God the Father.

We should also mention Peter's word about the judgment by fire that will take hold of the whole present earth and heaven on that day, so that the heavenly bodies will dissolve with a crash, the elements will be dissolved and the earth and the works on it will be burned up 2 Peter 3:10.

This is the most extensive and grandiose use that God will make of His consuming fire on the day of the Son of Man. No true believer in the Bible will consider even for a moment when presented with the question: What purpose will this colossal world fire serve? He will immediately have Peter's biblical answer ready: We expect from it and after it a new heaven and a new earth, according to its promise, in which righteousness will dwell.

That this consuming fire serves renewing, divine purposes, nobody will deny, to whom these are words of truth. But if God can and will make such a comprehensive, terrible fire judgment serviceable to his redeeming, transfiguring love intentions with a creation that is ready to speak through sin, death and darkness, so that a new heaven and a new earth emerge from it as a final result, what then still stands in the way of believing that God will also make the fire prepared for the devil and his angels serviceable to his restoration purposes in the same way, likewise with resounding success.

But we have not yet given the final answer to the question that moves us so deeply: How and by what means will the last enemy, death, be abolished? We have already received hints and hints on which line this lies.

One thing clearly confronted us, that the devil of death will no longer have power, since he himself will be the helpless victim of the other death. Thus, only the living God remains, who is then to be feared because he can destroy body and soul in hell (Mat. 10:28).

But if the second death, the lake of fire, is not an independent power, which even the almighty Lord would not see any possibility to control or to abolish, then it will remain as it is already written: It leads into hell and out again (1 Sam. 2, 6). And Ps. 90, 3: You turn the mortal into dust and say: Return, you children of men.

It is almost incomprehensible how in the imagination of really scripture-bound people the thought could gain such a dominance that there could be a form of death against which even the prince of life is powerless; that God has prepared a fire which he himself is not able to extinguish. For an appeal to the fact that the scripture itself describes that fire as unquenchable is just as meaningless as if one wanted to appeal to the scripture which says that the stars in the sky and the sand on the sea are innumerable, in order to prove with it that God himself cannot count the stars or the sand! Or he himself would not be able to understand his thoughts, judgments and ways, because the scripture calls them inscrutable and unfathomable!

And the solution of the whole question is of such simplicity that one could almost be tempted to speak of the Egg of Columbus. For, on the basis of divine revelation, there is no other method to be thought of for the final abolition of the last enemy, death, even in its worst form, than through the great central act of our God, by raising all the dead. 1 Cor. 15:54, 5 states: But when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, then shall the word be fulfilled: Death is swallowed up in victory! Death, where is your sting? Hell (Hades, second death), where is your victory?

Certainly, one will try to raise the objection that we have put Hades and hell on the same level, while the ecclesiastical dogmatics distinguishes very definitely between the two. We admit this, but we cannot see that there is any other than a difference of degree between the two, but never an essential one, as if the second death did not also share the essence of death, since it is of the same name.

No matter how powerful, hostile and terrible the second death may be imagined, it will never be given a character different from that given to it by the Scriptures. Therein it lies for ever clearly pronounced that its basic nature forms the direct opposition to life. If he can be abolished as an enemy at all, then only by being swallowed up by the victory of the incorruptible life in Christ, the firstborn of all creatures, the firstborn of the dead (Col. 1, 15. 18).

Now we have recognized that the second death can by no means mean annihilation. Because all other enemies of God and his Christ must have been abolished before him, otherwise he could not be abolished as the last enemy.

Thus, only this last enemy, the second death, remains to be eliminated in the whole wide universe. But now God has put all his enemies under the feet of the glorious Son, who until then had

completely finished with all the remaining enemies. He even had Satan, the murderer from the beginning, thrown into the lake of fire and thus finally crushed the satanic dragon's head of all the enmity that had been raging for millennia in the whole universe.

All previous possibility of seduction and darkening is eliminated forever, because the devil himself is in the lake of fire, a dethroned, completely nullified tyrant, rendered harmless, invalidated in the fire prepared for him.

As certainly as he could become a prey of death, so certainly he can become a prey of the imperishable life, which has been brought to light in the gospel of God, after eons of judgments, humbled, worn down. For life has appeared, and it is mightier than death. Jesus is victor, for he also disposes of and commands the second death. This instrument must also serve him and his great liberating purposes. Him all angels will worship. For death is swallowed up in victory.

3. the son subjected to the father

But when he says that everything is subjected to him, obviously he is excluded who subjected everything to him. But when all things shall be subject unto him, then shall the Son also be subject unto him that put all things under him (1 Cor. 15:27, 28). These are glimpses into the depths and heights of divine activity that drive us to astonished adoration. Any attempt to explain to our natural understanding all the processes and transformations that have taken place over the eons and led to such a goal, to make them comprehensible to our creative thinking, must fail. These are things which no eye has seen and no ear has heard, which have not come into the heart of any man, which God has prepared for those who love him and which he has revealed to us through his spirit.

They undoubtedly belong to what Paul summarizes in the great word: All things are yours, for you are Christ's, and Christ is God's (1 Cor. 3:22, 23). Therefore, no child of God can escape without harm the faithful immersion in these depths of God, which the Spirit of God searches and opens up to our worshipping spirit.

Likewise, we who are spiritual may also follow with calm confidence the bold conclusions which the apostle draws here from those words of the eighth Psalm. It is obvious that through the Holy Spirit he takes from that comprehensive Psalm word by mere inference a valuable and plausible meaning, which at that time the Holy Spirit did not give to the Psalmist to express in as many words. This is one example among many hundreds of how the revelation of the Scripture unfolds in a growing way and how the Scripture is its own best interpreter.

Obviously, there is an abundance of knowledge in the living word, which first appears as inconspicuous buds and is hardly noticed, because they are almost still under the bark. But when the time has come, they unfold their beauty to the wondering spirit.

So, too, as this example shows, there is a way, wrought by the Spirit of God Himself, of deducing and passing on, by way of sanctified reasoning, truths from God's words already available which are nowhere else set down as doctrine or instruction. There is, then, an intimate familiarity with divine thought, wrought by the spirit of wisdom and revelation, growing out of constant, chaste contact with Scripture, which enables one to draw inferences from words of revelation, for the content of which Scripture need not always give the fixed, formal expression. This is included in the great assurance which the Lord gave to His own of the special efficacy of the Holy Spirit, that He will guide us into all, the whole truth (i.e. into the organic, vital connection of all scriptural revelation). For this, however, the senses must be trained by habit.

What is the conclusion drawn by the apostle from this word of the Psalm? It consists in nothing else than that there is only one exception to everything that the Father has subjected to the Son: that is the Father himself. This is noteworthy and makes one think.

For what might have prompted the apostle to speak of an exception here at all? It can only be the explanation that the spirit of God was concerned to reject any thought of any other possible exception from the outset.

For the apostle himself says of the only exception he mentions that it is "obvious", that is, it is to be rejected from the beginning. For then it does not make sense, why it is still especially pointed out, if there is no danger for anyone to think, that the father is also subject to the son.

But if it should be emphasized with great emphasis that the whole universe is subject to the Son without any deduction from the Father, then this could not be done more effectively than by referring to this one self-evident exception. For if there were still anyone or anything - the Father excepted - who or which would finally refuse or withdraw from the complete, blessed, glorious supremacy and headship of the Son, then this could not and must not be concealed here, where there is talk of a manifest exception.

But now it is known and evident that, according to the prevailing Christian doctrine, a not inconsiderable number of manifest exceptions must be assumed if it is to be true that the devil and his angels, the beast, the false prophet, and all those who in conscious and persistent enmity against God and his Christ have departed into death, ruin, and damnation, will for all eternity abandon their conscious, furious, desperate enmity and indignation and kiss the scepter of the Son.

The logical, dogmatic consistency of the doctrine of endless damnation, of conscious persistence in open, impudent alienation from God can be understood from certain theological and philosophical assumptions. But it can never be justified biblically, brought into unclouded harmony with the whole of the scriptural revelation.

Now, however, the objection will be made that both the advocates of the doctrine of endless damnation and those of the eventual annihilation of the persistently ungodly hold that the result of the entire development of the world will be none other than the complete subjection of all that exists to the unconditional rule and power of the Son of God. The final supremacy of Christ, which cannot be shaken by anything, is to remain absolutely untouched also in those two camps.

For those who speak of the final destruction of Satan and his followers and victims, this is of course only possible by the Son of God making only a judging and finally destroying use of his indomitable omnipotence. The Son of God would then have appeared to destroy, to annihilate not only the works of the devil but also the devil himself. Thereby it would remain incomprehensible why he did not do this before the creation of man.

This lot of the beings affected by annihilation is less repulsive for the Christian and human thinking than the orthodox doctrine that these creatures are subjected to an infinite torture of body and soul which cannot be mitigated by anything and which does not serve any change for the better.

Unless, in the course of time, a quite unthinkable habituation with insensibility occurs in redeemed mankind, the cry of millions of compassionate hearts will arise: then rather annihilation, - if it can be, Father!

But what does the present word say to this objection? The word "submit" is used in these lines in different connections no less than five times. First, it is the Father who *subjects the All* to the Son; the Father is then expressly excluded from such subjection to the Son. Then it is firmly envisaged that with this single exception everything will one day be *subject to the Son*. And finally it is said of the Son that he himself will *submit to the Father*, who has *subjected* everything to him.

With such frequent use of the tense, which is obviously not unintentional and which could have been easily avoided, it should not be difficult to determine whether the tense used here has only one undivided meaning, applicable in all five cases, or whether it has, as we shall see in a moment,

a uniquely conceivable meaning in two compounds, and a meaning very different from it in the other three (but of the same kind).

Every thought, as if in the case of the submission of the father to the son, as well as in the case of the certainly prophesied submission of the son to the father, there could be a question of unwillingness or compulsion, is rejected by every child of God, yes, by every clear-thinking human being with deep disgust. So there can be no doubt at all that in two out of five cases the *submission* can only consist in a completely voluntary, moral devotion born of innermost harmony. Any other idea would be simply unbearable.

First the submission of the All to the Son takes place, then that of the Son to the Father. Thus, the completed submission of the All is the basis and prerequisite for the miraculous self-submission of the Son to the Father.

But what justification is there then for placing the self-subjection of the Son, which took place in perfect harmony, on a split substructure full of disharmony? For it is evident that, according to the doctrine of eternal damnation, only a very small part of the whole universe shall finally be subject to the Son in the same willing, blissful sense as the Son will be to the Father.

By far the largest part of mankind and the entire fallen angelic world remains in an agonizingly forced relationship to the Son, which will be fundamentally different from the subjection of the redeemed, like heaven and hell, like life and death.

This ambiguous, never to be reconciled meaning the traditional doctrine of endless damnation must of necessity give to this one word here. This is, in purely linguistic terms, an intolerable treatment of a biblical expression, which can only be explained by the great embarrassment in which the orthodox assertion of endless conflict between Creator and creature finds itself in the face of such plain, irrefutable statements of Scripture.

But as long as no compelling reason can be given why two fundamentally different meanings must be ascribed to the word "subdue" in this closed sentence structure, we do well to stick to the assumption that nothing else is meant by the submission of the whole universe to the Son than what is said by the submission of the Son to the Father.

That the apostle had no other in mind will now be revealed to us with overwhelming conclusive force from the short final sentence, the consideration of which we now turn to.

4. God all in all (or everything)

If in the whole Holy Scripture no other word were written about the final outcome of all divine activity in creation, history and government - it would be completely enough in this one to justify everything that the boldest flight of scriptural thoughts might gather from the rich treasures of divine revelation with inexpressibly joyful heart exultation as the actual full content of the Gospel of God. This it ever was, this it is, this it will remain to the eternities of the eternities: God all in all!

Beyond that, even for the Most High, who possesses heaven and earth, there can be no higher goals. Here lies the solution to all questions: the reconciliation of heaven and earth, the satiating satisfaction of all hitherto unsatisfied divine and creaturely longing: God all in all his creatures.

It truly takes a lot of daring to tamper with or cut short such a majestic word of our Savior God. Like an irresistible flood, this fullness of God pours over all the miserable ifs and buts that we have piled up into dams and walls in our self-glorification, so that they should mean insurmountable barriers for the omnipotence of holy love; the flood swallows them all.

And no one will rejoice more gloriously and shout more joyfully than we foolish "shippers" who thought we could neatly contain the overabundance of divine thoughts of glory and only let their waters trickle silently over our pious little fields.

How it will roar and roar, when once all abyssal depths will overflow from the living waters, which go out from the throne of God, when among the countless billions of thinking creatures there is not one more in God's distance and when all thoughts at all times have only one content, one fullness: Him, the Father of all spirits!

Highly significant is the fact that this indescribably bold claim of the apostle of the church, which surpasses the highest heights, stands before us as the aspired and now achieved conclusion of a carefully and comprehensively carried out proof. It does not emerge abruptly from the depths of the apostolic thoughts as if by magic. Nor do the trains of thought of the appointed steward of divine mysteries move in dark parables or night stories.

With masterful brevity, the Almighty's magnificent campaign plan against all hostile powers and forces was laid out for us: everything, everything is subjected to the faithful and true Son, the origin of all creation, the heir over all, the firstborn from the dead, the head not only of His body, the church, but of every dominion and power.

The only exception mentioned with the greatest clarity is the Father, who subjected everything to the Son.

And in the end the Son will also submit to the Father, he, the head over the whole universe, so that *God may be all in all!*

With it the aim direction of all divine creation and rescue forces which were ever effective is expressed clearly and precisely. There lies the sure key for the understanding of all events in heaven and on earth.

In simple divine sublimity the deep, clear origin of all divine activity in wisdom, omnipotence and love is revealed to our worshipping spirit. God has never wanted to do justice to himself other than to become everything in his creatures. He has never been able to come to rest, one understands then, than until this goal was reached!

The multitudes of creatures of all conceivable levels of disposition and receptivity line up in incalculable variety and diversity, and for all of them applies: In all of us God alone is everything. The word of the seer of Patmos is fulfilled: "And every creature that is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that which is in the sea, and all that is in them, I heard say, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13).

And the other word: Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and they cast down their crowns before the throne and say: Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power; for thou hast created all things, and by thy will they are and were created Rev. 4:9-11.

There is the adored one the Lord and God (the Father) who sits on the throne and who lives from eternity to eternity. And the cherubim together with the elders pay homage to him because of his now completed work of creation. This cannot be interpreted in any other way than that now before their enlightened eye the great aims of the Creator in the bringing forth of all things, which are created and have their existence by his will (in the Son and for the Son), have also been achieved, in that God's Creator wisdom has been justified and glorified in that he has become all in all.

Can there be left from here even the slightest shadow of doubt in which sense the subjection of the whole created universe to the Son is to be taken? We do not pay attention.

Just try at the same time to let the full content of this simple word - God all in all - have an undisturbed and undiminished effect on you, and next to it to hold the idea of an endless, agonizing enmity and never to be removed distance from God of countless creatures of the highest kind, predisposed to the image of God, and you will realize the impossibility of such a connection soon enough. A compensation is not conceivable. Either one must hold on to the endless torment of hell, or this word of God must be given up.

Representatives of the orthodox church doctrine of endless damnation and the annihilation of the ungodly have not shrunk from attempts to somehow reconcile words such as Phil. 2:9-11 and that discussed in the previous section of the submission of the All to the Son with the ideas of never-ending enmity to God or of gradually complete ruin and extinction of existence. But at the majestic greatness, the overwhelming unlimitedness of the word "God all in all" every effort to limit the restless triumph of divine omnipotence, holiness and love will slide off as completely hopeless and will come to nothing.

God can and will never become all in all until Christ has become all in all, as Paul describes in Col. 3, 1 as the actual goal of divine activity in the church. We, to whom this precious mystery was made accessible through faith, have both an example and a standard for that which, according to 1 Cor. 15:28, constitutes the final goal of all divine activity in all of His creatures.

No matter how long the path and career - the outcome that satisfies God Himself is assured.

This again illuminates for us the wonderfully high, divine calling of the congregation of true sons of God from all nations, tribes and tongues. These "sons of God" are bound together with the first Adam and his sin, and with all mankind, who have fallen into the fellowship and dominion of the formerly apostate "sons of God", the angels.

This community of brothers of the great firstborn is the fullness intended by the Father for the Son, i.e. the full measure of his own divine growth for the achievement of all those great goals which the Father decided in him from the eternities. And at the same time it is the measure and standard for what the glorious Son can and will make of a creation that has fallen into unfathomable depths of darkness, death and ruin. Once Christ has become everything in the members of his body, it is only a matter of time before the same glorious goal is achieved in the whole creation, which is eagerly awaiting the revelation of the sons of God.

Here it may be pointed out again that the field of vision of these apostolic words exceeds that of the prophecy of the revelation of John in width and extension considerably.

It is important to note that the references in the final chapters of the Apocalypse to the cowards, unbelievers, abominations, murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, liars, lying there in the lake of fire and brimstone, must not cloud our clear vision into the shadowless, light distance that opens up to us in the Word at hand: God all in all.

This is a goal that apparently has not yet been achieved in the final chapters of Revelation. Rather, the whole series of visions, which that book contains, is quite clearly set to the one great purpose, to subdue the whole universe first to the Son. But at the end of the revelation not yet all power and authority is abolished, as it is clear from 22, 5.

We are at the end of our investigations. Do we still need a special reference to the redeeming, liberating power of the glorious knowledge, even if only very imperfectly grasped, of the true, full gospel of God, who is the Savior of all men, the Father of all spirits, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Can there be a more worthy conception of the only true and living God than that which

presents itself to us without any compulsion, provided only that we allow every word of the whole revelation of Scripture its unabridged right to be taken fully?

His *omnipotence*, to which everything must serve, for which there are no impossibilities, which can cope with all enemies and haters without damaging its created dignity and moral majesty - it stands before our wondering spirit in inviolable majesty, in overwhelming beauty, because it serves only the purposes of love, which is God Himself.

His *wisdom*, which with unfailing certainty foresaw, considered, pondered everything beforehand, which was never to be upset or embarrassed by any plot of satanic and human wiles, intrigues and malice, no matter how deep and convoluted, which never needs to retract, correct or overrule a single word of divine revelation, who in heavenly simplicity overcomes all proud heights of creative thinking - not in cold, stiffening reflection, but in all-powerful, giving love, how she stands there so chastely, so loudly, so simply with all unfathomable depth, that the underage can grasp her and let himself be filled by her to the fullness of God.

And the unapproachable, all ungodly being with holy fire zeal consuming, relentlessly judging *holiness and justice*, which does not shrink from putting God's chosen ones, be it the chosen people, be it the firstborn son, be it his dearly bought community, into the most severe judgments, chastisements, tribulations and sufferings, years, centuries, millennia - it emerges unscathed, unshaken, but glowing with the fire of divine love, which swore and kept death to all death. It also overcomes everything, because it has allowed itself to be overcome by the unspeakable misery and lamentation of this lost world.

And the gathering and focal point of all divine love, wisdom, holiness and omnipotence - *the cross of Golgotha* - how great, how overwhelming its triumph, its power, its glory! Therefore to Him, the slain Lamb, to Him who reconciled all things to Himself, so that He brought peace through the blood, through the cross, through Himself, both what is in heaven and what is on earth, to Him be glory in the church to all generations of eternity of eternities. Amen!

A frank word on Pastor Thimme's critique of my book on the all-reconciliation in Christ

By E. F. Ströter

To explain this publication

In No. 47 and 48, 1916, of the community journal "Auf der Warte" appeared a critique of my book of the "All Reconciliation in Christ" from the pen of Father Thimme-Marburg, under the title "A New Gospel". Since this did not observe the limits of a factual review, immediately after the appearance of the first part, No. 47, I addressed an inquiry to the editorial staff as to how much space they would allow me to reply to these attacks. I received the following reply:

Neumünster, November 23, 1916

"We thank you most sincerely for your valuable inquiry, but regret to inform you that, owing to certain misgivings, it is not possible for us to permit a reply in our paper."

In the meantime, I wrote the "Open Word on P. Thimme's Criticism," since I took it for granted that "Auf der Warte" would include the same.

But when I received the negative reply, I sent the manuscript to Father Thimme, appealing to his sense of fairness and asking him to get the editors to let me have my say. If they persisted in their refusal, I would find another way to bring my rebuttal before the Christian public. In the same spirit, I also notified the editors and asked them to forward the manuscript to the Traktathaus, Bremen, from where it would be brought before the public.

To my regret, "Auf der Warte" finally refused to open its columns to me, and in the following the readers have before them exactly and unabridged what I had intended for publication through P. Thimme to the editors.

Commentary on such proceedings by a leading community journal is superfluous.

Kilchberg, Zurich

E. F. Ströter

The rather extensive criticism of the highly esteemed brother has not only disappointed me, it must also have disappointed many convinced representatives of the doctrine of the endless torment of hell, which I rejected and fought against. The undisputed importance of the subject matter demanded a thorough, factual treatment, especially of the biblical questions. Instead, the formal and personal moment predominates in the brother's explanations. The really factual illumination is in no proper relation to this.

Thus I am accused of valuing my work very highly. Three full columns bring samples of my passionateness and blackening in the literary representation, my unchastity in the exegesis and so on. It is claimed that this is the general character of the book. It is written in the high-strung, not to say in the overstrung consciousness of a reformatory deed. A whole column is devoted to gloomy predictions about the disastrous effects that my book, which will make a name for itself as once did Pastor Paul's Fündlein, must have in its wake. The emphasis of Christian kingdom work would be shifted from missions and evangelism to the cultivation of the knowledge of God's community. A slackening of evangelism is inevitable. I myself am presented as an example, I am lost to my actual task, lured by Satan onto a dead track and made harmless.

First of all, I would like to give the dear critic the assurance that his personal condemnations at least oblige me to thank him fraternally. I know my old treacherous heart long enough to trust him with everything that the brother wants to have found. That all this was consciously in my mind when I wrote the book, I could not say according to the truth. There the heart annunciator has probably alone the word.

Also, the insinuations of Ib. Brother's insinuations reminded me vividly of experiences that I had the privilege of making with brethren as a Methodist preacher in America 35 years ago. At that time, I dared to openly challenge the view prevailing in the large American free churches (unfortunately still today) of the task of the church to convert the world through the gospel in this age, and to direct the hope of the faithful in my congregations, also for the world, to the soon future of the Lord. Then I was also a "self-chosen reformer". Then one came to the annual conference with the black on white accusation that my preaching was crippling and stopping the missionary zeal in the congregations, whereby my accusers were only confronted with the somewhat uncomfortable fact that my congregation had just that year made the greatest missionary gifts in its history up to that time. My nearest church superior told me that it was a psychological puzzle to him: if he believed what I was preaching, that the world, instead of getting better and better, was only getting riper and riper for judgment, he would throw up his hands, throw in the towel, and let things go as they would. But of all this, he would see me doing the opposite.

The family resemblance of Thimme's accusations with those is unmistakable. It even occurs to me that over there at the moment they even knew exactly that I was out to found a new Ströter church! So really, nothing new under the sun. Several decades have gone by now. So the dear brother will not blame me if I do not take his concerns so tragically. Others also do not do this hopefully.

But these are secondary things and not at all what is important. For if my book is about such great things as the character of God and his Christ, about the final solution or non-solution of the greatest problem imaginable, the reconciliation of the world, and about what part the church as his body has in it, then he who is called to it is obliged to blow the trumpet so loudly and to take it quite thoroughly and carefully with the factual illumination of these questions.

For example, was the choice of the name "A New Gospel" under which the brother wrote a happy one? If for him it was only a matter of saying from the outset what was most frightening, then yes. For something worse could hardly be done than to immediately brand the book as an "accursed" work of art according to Gal. 1, 8.9. Would it not have been more factual and worthy to first examine whether the author did not want to use the word gospel in the exclusive sense? That is, whether the book only wants to be a decisive protest against the unfortunately also among us popular shortening and atrophying of the great gospel of God by an undue subjectivism, i.e. a one-sided, almost exclusive emphasis on the purely personal life of salvation?

A painful and tangible sample of how sad the situation already is was delivered several years ago by the leading German community conference itself. Two appointed community theologians were commissioned to speak on the topic: Reconciliation in Christ. Neither the speakers nor the many pastors and teachers present gave a single thought during the two days of in-depth discussion about the great area of the reconciliation of the two groups of humanity, Jews and Gentiles, accomplished on Golgotha, into one new man through the blood of Christ, the one body of Christ himself. This also went beyond the so-called simple gospel, because it was not about personal salvation, but about the healing of the most terrible division of the human family, which was accomplished by that one sacrifice and is now guaranteed forever. The fact that there is still little to be seen of this even among the people in Christ today does as little harm to the accomplished deed of God as the fact that in the fallen angelic world there is still nothing to be felt of an abatement of the insane enmity against God. God can wait.

When the scribe spoke as the last speaker and raised the question whether Eph. 2, 14-18 should not also be counted as the gospel of reconciliation in Christ, he was hardly understood. This actual failure of vision has never, as far as I know, been publicly lamented or condemned. I wonder if there is something in the fact that school theology still makes blind today as it did 1900 years ago?

This sample of subjectivistically oriented inability or unwillingness to see was often thought of by the writer when he wrote the book. His critic could have known something about it, too, because it did not happen in the angle. No, dear brother, the "peculiarity of the doctrine of redemption is not what makes the gospel the gospel." But certainly the rejection of the delicious truth that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, that Christ is the Atonement not for the sin of believers alone, but of *all men* - is a mutilation of the glorious gospel of God. Against this I may and must raise my voice with all the power at my command. Woe to me if I do not preach this gospel.

The so-called simple gospel, beyond which one does not want to go at any price, is, strictly speaking, only a very essential sector of the gospel, but never the whole full gospel of redemption and effective reconciliation of the whole lost creation. The accusation of a "new gospel" is null and void.

Now, what is the factual criticism of Ib. Brother's factual criticism of my treatment of the biblical material, which he himself recognizes as very rich and which I have worked on? It is essentially limited to three pieces:

1. I am said to have failed to live up to or avoided a number of biblical statements about the will of man, about faith, unbelief and about judgment.
2. The main attack is directed against my mistake to regard the word "all" as a mathematical quantity and not rather as an organic or living one.
3. The third objection is raised against my unjustified conclusions on my teaching from Old Testament examples as well as from words of the Lord. All this under the collective term of unchaste exegesis.

To 1. I would like to say that everyone who wants to take the trouble to study my book with care and thoroughly - not only cursorily - can convince himself that the accusation is not true. In any case, our brother has failed to prove it. However, his judgment would hardly be different even if I had added ten more chapters on the human will, on faith and unbelief, and on judgment, as long as I did not make the creaturely will the same insurmountable obstacle that he sees in it for the almighty divine will of love, or as long as I did not evaluate judgment in the same way as the prevailing doctrine of endless torment and chastisement.

There is a little more to be said about the second main point. It seems to me as if the brother wants to prove more than he himself would like. He claims - and tries to support this by a number of examples, which taste very much like reason conclusions, as he rebukes them in my case - that the word all, understood in the organic sense, allows or even demands the exception. The objection cannot be denied a certain correctness, but it is very limited. If one puts it to the test, then the matter becomes difficult. When Br. Thimme preaches: He who forgives all your sins and heals all your infirmities, does he use the caution to avoid being understood by his hearers in the mathematical sense of every sin without exception? Or when it is written: Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, does the "organic version" of "all" also allow or demand exceptions? Surely his rule can hardly be used as an exegetical or hermeneutical canon. I am sure he does not think of using it himself in such cases. But here it suits him to turn this point against me. Of course, it cannot be examined here what the insufficiency of his statement is. Thank God, we are quite independent of these subtle distinctions in matters of the all-atonement, as we shall see.

He openly admits that I refer to the words of the apostle Eph. 1, 10: Phil.2, 9-11 and Col. 1, 15-20 for the counsel of God for all reconciliation. So after all conceded firm biblical basis. Now, the Holy

Spirit has sufficiently ensured, especially in the last two passages, that even for the simplest reader any honest doubt about the scope of the meaning of "all" and "every" is completely excluded.

One could confidently put to some linguist the task to express in even clearer words that really every tongue, every knee in the whole created universe is meant. Of course, I was surprised why the brother should try this impassable way just here. But I was pleased that he disdained to choose the popular way of making this submission and adoration of the Son only a forced one, done under angry gnashing of teeth.

No less clear is the context of Col. 1, 20. There the spirit of prophecy refers back to the scope of the total creation, which he presents in verse 16, 17 like this: For in him all things were created, things in heaven and things on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all (in time and rank), and all things consist in him. Can the organic version of the word "all" allow an exception here? But probably not. Can it be denied that under the thrones, dominions, principalities and powers the whole world of spirits and angels is included, of light as well as of darkness? Or were they not originally created by the Son, in Him and for the Son?

Is it now an "unchaste exegesis," is it an altogether unwarranted inference, to claim that at verse 20 the word is to be understood in precisely the same scope as the Holy Spirit Himself has established with the greatest clarity in the closest context? And then can our brother claim that there is not a single clear word in all the Scriptures to the effect that even the fallen angelic world is included in the great divine council of reconciliation in Christ?

I ask you to consider another example from the infallible Holy Scriptures. After that the end, when he hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when he will have done away with all rule, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. As the last enemy, death will be abolished. For to him - his Christ - the Father has put all things under his feet. But when he says that all things are put under him, it is evident that he is excluded who put all things under him (1 Cor. 15:24-27). Here only the hint that the Holy Spirit has masterfully made sure that we know exactly which exception is to be made and which is not. Because if he makes only one, then there is no other.

No, dear brother, your standard fails. It is far from securing a chaste exegesis. But in view of this fact, which can be checked by every simple reader of the Scriptures, it is untenable to claim that my interpretation "boasts of human wisdom" and is based on "mere conclusions of reason" and not on clear statements of the Scriptures.

Now a word on the third main charge, that of jumping to conclusions in applying Old Testament models and the Lord's words. First, I believe I have been in a good school in this piece. To me, the methods of the Master and His apostles are authoritative and exemplary. Thus, when I hear the Lord conclude: but that the dead rise, Moses also implied at the bush, where he calls the Lord: God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; yet he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all live (Luk 20, 37. 38). What is this but one of the boldest conclusions from the simple name of God, Moses not having said a word about resurrection. Is this also a transgression of the Lord Jesus beyond the clear word of Scripture? Or, when Paul allows himself from the procedure of Abraham with Hagar and Ishmael the enormous conclusion for Christians of the law: the son of the handmaid shall not inherit with the son of the free (Gal. 4, 30). Are these samples of "Jewish backwardness" in Jesus or Pauline rabbinism, as modern theology would have it?

Besides many examples of this kind, however, we have clear instruction that everything that happened to those in the OT was an example and written as a warning to us, who are to benefit from the yield of all ages (1 Cor. 10:11).

But what does our brother want to tell us when he gives his own interpretation of these words compared to my "daring conclusions" from the word of the Lord: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me: He gave this word to His own, who were facing the greatest difficulties in evangelizing the world. This they were to master in view of the unlimited power given to their Lord and Master, with which he wanted to stand behind them. Thus, this word is meant as a consolation and encouragement for the small flock, but not as a basis for all kinds of theosophical speculations about the origin and end of evil.

If I understand the brother correctly, then the justification of the interpretation of the Lord's words is limited by the measure of the immediate, practical use to be made of them. This is the measure of pronounced subjectivism. Although there seems to be truth in it, such a fundamental position on Scripture is nevertheless questionable.

Only casually here the question, how much comfort and encouragement would have remained to the disciples, if they had excluded the devil and his whole army after the procedure recommended by Br. Thimme with the word "all" force immediately. For according to the prevailing church doctrine, for which Br. Thimme breaks a lance, the Lord Jesus will never prevent him from finally taking away from him by far the largest part of his dearly bought booty.

That standard is the same one that is responsible for the most confusing interpretations of divine prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, because it is set only on the supposedly all-superior practical edification. It is he who has veiled the view of God's children for centuries against God's wonderful thoughts with his people Israel. He has helped that the church today still sees its actual heavenly calling only as in the half-light, because it is persistently refused to look beyond what serves for the immediate subjective "comfort and encouragement".

Accordingly, even the entrance to the Gospel of John about the Word who was from the beginning, who was with God and who was God, could be labeled as "theosophical speculation", with which we could not do much in the practical life of salvation, especially in the evangelization of the world. There is a theology that allows itself such criticism. Does our brother want to speak out? As far as I know him, certainly not. But why does he strike such tones here, where it is a matter of the vested and sealed right of the true sons of God? Because they may recognize with enlightened eyes of the heart, which is the hope of his calling (as world redeemer and all-reconciler), and which is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in his saints, in the church, which is his body, the fullness of him, who fills all in all.

In conclusion. Where did our brother get the right and authority to dictate to the church: Leave it alone, it does you no good, stick to the simple gospel of the crucified and risen one, etc. Since when has he or anyone else been commissioned to offer this to the church as a substitute for the apostolic: test everything and keep what is good? Are there any "lords of our faith" for the true community? Are we not to consider everything as harm and excrement against the exuberant knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord? And should we let ourselves be distracted by cheap slogans about spiritual aristocracy and the simple gospel? We are called to the fellowship of the Son of God, who is greater than "my personal Savior," whose tasks and interests, plans and goals reach further than the narrow limits of my subjective life of salvation. And all his interests are ours, his tasks for the fullness of time are ours, because we are one body and one spirit with him.

The Scriptures expressly exhort us to leave the elementary instruction of Christ and to pass on to maturity and maturity. We can never do this on the way of even the deepest experience of salvation, but only on the way of the living knowledge of his fullness of God from the Scriptures, which testify of him. I can never experience the King of kings, the Lord of lords as such, but I can recognize him. And his very Spirit, from whom we are begotten like him, can and will guide us into all truth. In the process, our personal inner life will not be neglected, we can believe that.

You may judge my views as you like, but that is not the point. I only ask whether it is not high time that the church of God seriously and honestly deals with these questions. If I have contributed nothing to the solution of the same, well, I will bear the judgment of my Lord. But if my book has only half of the importance that Br. Thimme assigns to it, then - not its author - but its content has a good right to be treated differently.

Insightful theologians have long since admitted that the last things have by far not received the attention and work-through they deserve. Now we are all deeply imbued with the conviction that the future of the Lord is near. So it is important that we, as stewards, offer food in due season. And should we want to prevent the congregation of God from dealing in detail with these questions that encompass heaven and earth and concern their own profession?

If I have attacked it wrongly, is there no one who attacks it rightly? Mere papal condemnation of an inconvenient book is not enough. I cannot abandon the hope that the subject matter will nevertheless receive a different treatment and treatment than the completely inadequate criticism of my dear brother Thimme.

Or does one really want to define the German community movement from doctrinal types that had to suffice four hundred years ago? One hears the slogan a little too loudly and too often: Back to the Reformation fathers! This can be disastrous. One should see to it that one does not come to Rome unawares under this banner!