

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Volume 2

Annuals 1954, 1955, 1956

By Bro. Giuseppe Petrelli

TO THE READER

“The Kingdom of God” was written in Italian by Brother Giuseppe Petrelli as a quarterly publication. These quarterly publications were compiled into volumes and printed in Italy.

In 1985, the volumes were translated into English. With God’s help, the translated volumes are being printed in English.

This is Volume 2 of the 1954, 1955, 1956 compilation.

SOUL BLOOD – SOUL PERSON – PERSONALITY

Distinguishing and harmonizing the scriptures delivers us from errors and false doctrines. It is better to know little and well, than much and confusedly. One can know all of the Bible by heart and know nothing.

In Leviticus 17:14 we read: “For it—Blood—is the life of all flesh; the blood is for the life thereof.” (In Italian, it reads, “the blood is in place of the soul.”) From this it could be argued that upon death, all of man goes under the ground and there is a sort of annihilation by which one must wait for a new creation, an entirely new creation, because it is new for the people who accept Jesus Christ, but not new in the sense of those who, leaning on isolated verses, teach that all of man goes under the ground upon death. Before reading something about the soul that does not go under the ground, we recommend to the well-intentioned readers not to be confused by some expressions from the book of “Ecclesiastes,” because such a book must be read in its entirety, and not in part, in order to be understood. It is the testimony of a philosopher, a great thinker, who tried to resolve the problem of existence by means of his own intellect, observing that which the senses of the natural man observe, and in such observations, he described what he was thinking in the various times and circumstances. But he did not remain in any of these cogitations that lead to skepticism and, we would say, desperation; because in conclusion, he came to know that there is God Creator, and that all will come to judgment. And therefore, the beginning of wisdom is to fear God. It is painful that many stumble at expressions in the book of “Ecclesiastes,” and they do not understand, or do not want to understand that it—exactly such a book—must lead devout souls (and no one can be devout if he is not

humble and therefore, mistrusts his own reasoning), closer to Heaven.

But the word "soul" does not always refer to blood. In fact in Matthew 10:28 we read, "Fear not them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." It is clear that in killing the body, the blood—even if it was not shed—becomes gelled and does not circulate. Hence the physical death. That which cannot be killed by anyone, no matter what becomes of the blood, the Lord calls also "soul," and this, precisely because it cannot be killed, does not follow the body under the ground.

Let the reader read again Mark 8:35-37, ignoring other passages. And it seems to us to be enough. That is, for the man who is humble in heart, and who does not persist in that which seems truth to him, but who is disposed like a little child always to learn, and to allow himself to be corrected—for such an individual we have said even too much; for others, whatever we say is to no avail. There are prejudices; there are vanity and pride that impede many—because of taking sides—from listening and confessing themselves in error. Remember that the wisdom that is from Above is yielding—that is, disposed to listen and to learn.

We write for those who are well-intentioned, to whom can be applied the serious warning of St. Paul to St. Timothy, in 1st Timothy 5:21. It is a serious and profound exhortation, never read and considered enough, and which we love to repeat. Let it be weighed: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another (New Am. Stand. Bible reads *without bias*), doing nothing by partiality." So much is so strongly said—not to a stranger, not to an infant Christian—but to a saint, to one who was

also an apostle—to a Timothy. Ah, dear ones, let us meditate with fear and trembling.

And “Let him who hath ears to hear, HEAR.” Amen.

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENCE

It appears to us that in apostolic times meetings were for everyone together—children and adults. Families grow together. Little by little, the little ones learn.

God has blessed us in simplicity and we want to continue in it, teaching thus, each time, as led by the Holy Spirit.

We desire brotherly communion with all; however, we must remain faithful to the light that we have and to as much as the Lord requires of us.

DEVOTING ONESELF TO PRAYER

This is the order of the words in the text: “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” (Original text: “To prayer devote yourselves constantly.”) That is, whatever may have to be neglected because of unforeseeable circumstances, prayer must never be neglected. It means: be in prayer (and it includes our various relationships with God that precede it); make it the center of your attention and activity. “Increase

our faith.” (Luke 17:5, 6). They had heard things that constrained them to reflect on themselves, and they exclaimed, “Increase our faith.” Jesus answered that if they had as much faith as a grain of mustard seed, they would be able to say to this sycamine tree, “Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.” Then He spoke of serving the Lord, and after having served Him the best that one has been able, even if all that which has been commanded has been done, it is always necessary to humble oneself and to consider oneself an unprofitable servant. That is, we should judge ourselves as unprofitable.

The grain of mustard seed is a small seed; but in one of the parables of the kingdom of God, it is said that after it has been planted, it grows and becomes a tree. Since by faith He has taken the figure of the grain of mustard seed, the lesson is that faith, small as it may be at the beginning, must be planted—that is, practiced. Works make faith perfect (James 2:22; Colossians 2:7). Planted, it grows.

Someone asked an old man the secret for having faith increased, and he had this answer, “Exercise that which you have.” It may be small—perhaps nothing. Begin now to believe and, believing, continue to believe and to work. *While* the ten lepers were going, they were cleansed, not before. If after receiving the command to go to the priests for their offering, which could be offered only if healed, they would have said that they could not move before being healed, they never would have been healed. Under the fire of that voice, as sick as they were, they moved themselves, and while they were going, they were cleansed. While the pieces of bread and fish were being distributed, they were multiplied. Exercise, therefore—sow the faith that you have, small as it may be, and it will spread out like the grain of mustard seed.

IF ANYONE IS ASHAMED OF HIM AND HIS WORDS...

He appeared in a manner that they did not expect, and He was not received by many; but the few who received Him just as He presented Himself—that is, in humiliation—had the right to be made sons of God.

What of today? No one is ashamed, today, of Jesus on the Throne. Even those whom we are ready to qualify as being “unfaithful,” would be honored today to receive the Lord; but today He presents Himself also in an unknown way. That is, in one of His unpopular disciples, or one who is not approved by the ecclesiastic majority, and against whom a sentence, written or unwritten, has been given that he should not be received. Even today, Jesus passes disguised, incognito, and many of us do not see him because His aspect, reflected in one of His followers who loves to live in a hidden manner and does not conform to organizations and human agreements, does not allow anything to be seen of which we, men who are subject to vanity and to theatricality, appreciate. And we see Him without form nor any beauty that we should desire Him. Be careful, be careful, oh my brothers! BE CAREFUL!

The Lord PASSES. Let us not let Him pass without having recourse to Him, and recognizing Him in all His Ways, even in the least of His people and in the despised.

SODOM – WHERE THEY CRUCIFIED THE KING

(Revelation 11:8; Isaiah 1:10)

A recommendation: Be it far from you, oh reader, and from me who writes, to yield to the seducing spirit that attempts to place bad portraits on the backs of others and the good ones to ourselves. May you and I have the spirit of holy fear that occupied the eleven when, having heard that one of them would betray Jesus, did not suspect anyone, but each one, preoccupied with himself, asked the One who alone knew their hearts, "Is it I?"

We must be objective without suspecting anyone or flattering and approving ourselves. A harsh theme is before us: A great city, "which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified." That is, their Lord, the Lord of the two faithful witnesses. (Read all of Revelation Chapter 11).

It is clear that this city, literally was Jerusalem; and it is likewise clear that, spiritually (the word is in the text) it cannot be other than that of which Jerusalem is a symbol. Let us not always attribute certain types to the Jews, or only to them. We Christians have mistreated this noble and travailed people too much. Let us examine ourselves!

At the time that John wrote, there were cities that were greater and more important than Jerusalem. Therefore the words "great city" refer more than to the place or to a mass of people. The promise in Revelation 3:12 is: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out; and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God; and I will write upon him my new name." Note the

words "New Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven." It is clear that the Bride of the Lamb is indicated, for whom Jesus is also King and Lord. The words "out of heaven" presume that there is another one on the earth. We know the severe message of Isaiah (1:10 ff) which was directed to that people. We occupy ourselves with the great mass that goes under the name of "Christian Church." A few passages will help in understanding why it is precisely the nominal Christians who are the worst persecutors of the saints. When Jesus said that it was expedient for Him to go to Jerusalem, He added that every prophet must die there. It is written in Acts 14:22 that we must enter the kingdom of God through much tribulation. In Hebrews 12:28, after pointing out various heights (and what heights!), there is the invitation: "Receiving the Kingdom," a definitive, resolute act of one who, finally part of Zion, prostrates himself to Jesus and accepts Him as King. Reader, meditate: "AS KING"—ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGN.

But such a message in Hebrews 12:18-28 was not, and is not, agreeable to the majority of readers and hearers. After verse 24, there is an interruption. The writer exclaims, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." He felt the resistance in the hearers or readers, and opened a severe parenthesis (verses 25 to 27). Then he closed with the invitation to receive the Kingdom, and to remain firm in the Grace and discipline of Heaven, concluding that God is a consuming fire.

This message is not to Jews, but to Christians who had been "Judaizing" at that time. But there have been, and there are, Judaizing Christians in every age. This too, is a serious theme. Therefore, the great city of which it is written in Revelation 11:8 is the mass of Christianity, with the exception of the relatively few—the Remnant—who are (who is) "the New Jerusalem." We recognize that even the New Jerusalem is great in number—formed and being

formed—in which there certainly are hidden souls who perhaps have never entered a church. (John 10:16 is more extensive than one can imagine.)

A sad city is that of Revelation 11:8: It exposes dead bodies to the curiosity of all! It is called Sodom and Egypt. We prefer not to describe the places, it being enough for us to say that the greed for earthly goods carries with it every vice. There is much to say—we prefer to limit ourselves.

There is an ancient proverb that says, “The corruption of that which is excellent, gives that which is very bad.” The best men are found scattered here and there, salt and light, in the mass of Christians; but likewise the worst monsters of iniquity are found there. The two extremes touch each other. At the same table, under the eyes of Jesus, Judas and John were sitting. For a time Judas seemed to be the favorite, as signified by the sop that was given to him.

Oh reader, if you truly want to be a Christian OF CHRIST, and decide in the spirit to travel as in Hebrews 12:18-24, and want (WANT) Jesus as King, prepare yourself for martyrdom. Churches, in general, are occupied with many things and also a little (also a little) with Christ. But with Jesus Christ as Lord King—oh, that is something else! As the Message in John 6 distanced people, so in the same way, a calm but firm portrayal of Him, Him alone, reduces numbers. But the earthly Jerusalem wants numbers and feasts! You—prepare yourself to suffer!

WITH THE WILD BEASTS AND WITH THE ANGELS

(Mark 1:12, 13)

Just like that: With the wild beasts, and with the angels. The beasts are mentioned first; the angels afterward. Many times, he who wants the company of angels must, like Jesus, get used to living where there are wild beasts. He sent His disciples like sheep among wolves; however, the wolves are impeded from doing harm until the Lord has accomplished His plan toward the sheep. We will try to familiarize ourselves with this which is truth for the church.

Let us read in Mark 1:12, 13: “And immediately the Spirit driveth Him into the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto Him.” He did not go into the desert by His choice, but was driven there by the Holy Spirit, because Jesus, in His humiliation, as a true man, depended always, in everything, on the Father; He was therefore moved only and always by the Holy Spirit. He cast out demons by means of the Finger of God, which is the same as saying by means of the Holy Spirit. Therefore no one was able to touch Him until His time had come. Those of Nazareth pushed Him to the edge of the precipice, but they were not able to go beyond this, because Jesus passed unharmed in their midst. On another occasion the Jews, scandalized by His affirmation that before Abram was, He, the Son of God IS, they, the Jews tried but were not able to stone Him. When Jesus said that He had to go to Judea to awaken Lazarus and to bring him back to life, He answered the disciples who were terrorized by the fear that the Jews would stone Him. “Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of the world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.” (John 11:9, 10). In chapter 11 of Revelation there are before us two witnesses dressed in sackcloth, in humiliation and

penitence, because the true messengers of Jesus, while they speak with authority to others, they themselves, full of fear and trembling before the Lord, must be immersed in the spirit of humiliation and penitence. They must be courageous in giving the message, but in a way that their behavior says that they do not feel that they are better than others. Rather, they are more needy because of the ratio that exists between the greatness of the light and the responsibility. The two messengers speak with such authority that fire comes out of their mouths, since the Lord is a consuming fire and His words make the heart burn.

He is the God who answers by fire. The two messengers could neither be stopped nor killed until they had accomplished their mission. There is a time when no one can touch the Christian. He can be tempted, yes, but never abandoned if—let's understand one another—he walks in the straight and narrow way mapped out by Providence. When the two had finished their mission, the powers of darkness killed them; but God raised them up. Thus it is for the church—we say, “The Church of Jesus Christ,”—we repeat, that which is established by Him. We, good intentions notwithstanding, are able to build temples and gather people, but the Church is built by Him alone. We must pray for all men and love them, and the result of our prayers will be that many shall not be condemned, and the time will come for them to hear the message of pardon and justification. And that is great—but as for our prayers making them the elect—that is, destined to be the Bride of Christ, for such are destined before the foundation of the world—this is not given to us. Let us explain: the “Church,” His Church, is a people predestined, called and elected, but the Lord wants that all men should be saved, if they accept the light, which light is Jesus Christ (John 1:9), even if they don't know Him in their minds. Now it is only too true that the calling and election must be confirmed and established, made sure,

according to the language of St. Peter (2nd Peter 1:10), so that the election can be lost, but never given by strength of man. Enough on this arduous and alas, little-known subject. But we repeat, we must pray for all men and testify of Him, Jesus.

To the subject: In Psalm 23:5 we read, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." It is a prophecy of the Church of which David is one of the most beautiful types. That is, the Church must decide to be fed, and the word "table" is more than hearing the gospel, although that is implied; she must sit at the table with the Lord, in intimacy. There are enemies present, always. Our old self who does not leave us as long as we are in these bodies; false brothers are present who would like to paralyze us in the holy decisions; the accuser is near to tell us evil of others and to frighten us, bringing the past before us again. In short, enemies are around us and we must harden our forehead; and rather than paying attention to enemy forces, we must fix our eye and our heart on Jesus Christ. Only thus, remaining at His table, will we receive more. We have our head "anointed with oil."—control of the mind—rather, we receive the mind of Christ. And rather than being anxious that we must multiply religious activities without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are so enriched that "our cup runneth over." There is enough for us and for others. Such, therefore, is the destiny of the Church.

However, if we are not in intimate communion with the Lord—how, where, when, and how much He wants—the enemy forces have power over us. We must assure ourselves, time after time, that we are abiding in Jesus and are moved only by Him and for His glory. Permit us a recollection that goes back many years to a mission in a foreign land; I am a witness. In a certain meeting place there appeared one who

was causing a disturbance. He was a demon-possessed person who, according to us, was beyond any possible help; he had gone beyond the measure in which we could have prayed for him. A truly pitiful case; by that I do not mean to say the final word of what the Lord may have reserved for him, because we do not like to extend ourselves beyond what we are assured of, and we leave the future in the blessed hand of the Lord. The demon-possessed one was coming around for the purpose of disturbing. He tried several times to kill a servant of the Lord, but he did not succeed. He would lie in wait, armed with a rifle, near the place where the servant had to pass, in places that were somewhat solitary, but he could never see him alone, or when he did see him, it seemed to him that the servant was accompanied by a multitude of armed people. In a meeting in which there were many people, he came one day and tried to disturb the order of the service. He got up on his feet and began to speak using a language beyond human ability to understand. The presiding elder motioned to him to be silent; but he shouted louder, and then there was the insistence that he should stop, and he was commanded to do so in the Name of Jesus. He did not obey, but he became more arrogant and assumed a leonine voice with frightening roaring. The congregation began to sing a song that remembered the Blood of the Lord. Nothing availed. The eyes of the frightened presiding elder and of the frightened congregation were fixed on a poor, sick missionary who was seated and it seemed that even he was discouraged. The latter prayed in secret, something like this: "Lord, the demon is stronger than I, and I feel weak in everything and am also sick. If you do not strengthen me and command, I cannot rebuke that monster." And then there came down from heaven an extraordinary vigor and the missionary felt his bones being strengthened. He got up on his feet; he felt a vigor that made him remember the supernatural strength of Samson, and he could have broken even hard objects. He began slowly but firmly, to walk

toward the demon-possessed person; he did not say even one word but, lifting his arm, he made a vigorous gesture with his hand, pointing to the door. The demon knows the strength of God, and when it is God who moves, he trembles; in fact, he began to tremble, shaking like one who was mortally wounded. Then, as if an invisible hand were lifting him up bodily, he was thrown out, and he went out shouting and running.

But there was another occasion in which the same missionary had the opposite experience. One evening, at the end of the meeting, he called together the various elders, and the demon-possessed person also presented himself. That servant began to rebuke him in the Name of the Lord, but the other not only did not obey, but became more arrogant and threatening. Then that servant remembered that it was he who had rebuked and he who had used the "In the Name of the Lord," and not the Holy Spirit; he fell on his knees asking for pardon, and prayed that the Lord would deliver him. The Lord delivered them, driving out the disturber. We want to say that the enemy forces are frightening; they are beyond our strength, and yield neither to our rebuking, nor to songs, not to verbal commands that are given, even when pronouncing the Blessed Name. *He* is needed—Jesus Christ—by means of the Holy Spirit.

Now we can better understand the incident in Acts 19:13-16: "Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded." Let us

be careful not to pronounce the Blessed Name lightly, but to ask for grace to live and move in that Name. There is none other in the universe, but only at that Name must every knee bow, of creatures and creation, in heaven, in earth, and under the earth.

Let us conclude: Jesus was with the wild beasts and the angels were ministering to Him. As it was of Him, so it is of the Church. Angels minister to us if, moved by the Holy Spirit, we live and move only in Jesus and for His glory. Then we also shall be in this double and continuous spectacle of demons, of enemies, beasts of all qualities—and also of communion with saints and angels. Then that which is written in Hebrews 12:22 is realized: “But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.”

Glorious Lord: Son of Man, Son of God who lived and is remembered how it is recorded, so that immersed in Him, we walk from now on and always in His footsteps. Amen.



SAVE ME FROM THIS HOUR – FOR THIS CAUSE
CAME I UNTO THIS HOUR

(John 12:27)

There are such hours in everyone’s life. For the Son of Man, it was because He had to save others. For us, it is mostly because we have failed in something—and on some occasion

it is because the Lord wants to bless others by means of us. However it may be, it is impossible for us to save ourselves from *that hour*. The Lord, in His time, comes to our aid. We cannot run away, and every escape seems impossible. But it is then we must trust more, because what is impossible for us, is easy for Him.

And He will deliver us when the trial is sent by Him or is permitted by Him, or when the error into which we have fallen because of our foolishness, has had its effect. He, in a way that we cannot anticipate, will know how to help us, to bring us to a better condition than before, when what we are going through has been fully used by Him for our humiliation.

And meanwhile, as we are sighing for deliverance, hatred for our own flesh will be deepened in us; and our love for Him—Who becomes always more the great Liberator—and our debt toward Him, both continue to grow.

.....

IT IS A CLOUD – IT WILL PASS

I remember my impression as a child when I attended displays of fireworks. Smoke darkened the sky, and it seemed that the sky-rockets would strike the stars. However, after a short time I would see the sky again as before; and of all that noise and smoke, there remained nothing the next day except a little burned paper, scattered here and there. So it is of persecution by the wicked. It seemed that the Emperor Julian would annihilate even the name of "Christian." He wanted to revive paganism. He persecuted, in an obstinate way, the faithful Attanasio, one of the greatest champions of

faith that the Church has had. However, when Attanasio was informed of the determination of the powerful sovereign, he exclaimed, smiling, "It is a small cloud; it will pass." Let us look, therefore, to the Lord, and all the contrary things will appear to us as small clouds; they will pass, and the sun will shine on us and will be more luminous than before.

.....

SILENCE

The Lord answered the prophet Habakkuk, and revealed to him the invasion and the arrogance of the Chaldeans, who are a type of all those who are proud and violent, never stable in anything because they do not have peace. The message closes with these words: "But the Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him."

The prophet Zephaniah received the revelation of the punishment of Judah and Jerusalem for their meetings and abominable practices, then he exclaims: "Be silent before the Lord God! For the day of the Lord is near." (New American Standard Bible, Zephaniah 1:7).

The prophet Zechariah had the vision of Jerusalem being measured, and heard the warning to Zion, the Church, to flee, and the promise that the Lord would dwell in the midst of His people. Then the announcement: "Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord; for He is raised up out of His holy habitation."

Three preparations: He is in His temple; He lets you know that His day comes—is near—in which He puts all things in place in order that you do not lose fear of the Lord. And also: He measures Jerusalem—with a measurement very different

from that of man—in order to gather the remnant, and to have a holy people.

Three admonitions: Make your heart a temple of the Lord; do not imitate the religious peoples with mixed meetings and practices; let yourself be measured, and ask Him for His holiness. These things alone will keep your earth, your flesh, in silence. And you, who live in this manner, be in peace; look to Him and worship Him. *SILENCE*.

.....

THERE WHERE YOU ARE

Let us read in Genesis 21:19: “And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went and filled the bottle with water, and gave the lad to drink.” The well of water was nearby, but the poor woman had not seen it; and meanwhile she and the lad were dying of thirst. But God heard the voice of the lad and opened the eyes of the mother, and she saw the well of water: they were safe.

The places, the people, the circumstances around us change, but God does not change, and He is everywhere, if we turn to Him. We do not need to run, but we must remain firm, there where we are, and wait for Him. If He wants, it is He who must move us. Someone has said that we should be occupied and preoccupied not with where and how to stay for our good, but in doing good, in whatever place, surroundings and condition in which we find ourselves. We must be faithful in the little—at times insignificant in our own eyes—in which we might find ourselves. And He who sees everything and

weighs the spirits, wants our faithfulness; and does not weigh actions, but the motives behind them. He knows how to use us, and make us go, if He so desires. The apostle has said: "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called." (1st Corinthians 7:20). That is, until God lifts the cloud from above you, and clearly indicates something new, remain where you are. Entreat Him that He make you faithful and He, exactly in those surroundings that seemed desolate and sterile to you, right in that place, He will unveil to you unseen treasures—and you will enjoy unexpected blessings. Remain firm; wait for Him.

.....

I KNOW

(Job 19:25; 2nd Timothy 1:12)

Both of these "I KNOW"—one taken from the book of Job and the other from the second letter to Timothy—are among the few affirmations that arise from humility and not from presumption and pride. They affirm—after repeated disappointments—a single certainty.

To Job, who was struck in his possessions, in his children, and then was smitten with sore boils in his body, there remained for a time the illusion that his acquaintances and friends would have understood and comforted him. Since God had abandoned him (so it seemed to him), rather, He had made him a target for His arrows, Job invoked consideration from his friends: "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me." (Job 19:21). But to whom was he addressing those words? To figures who remained before him dumb

and dismal, and who were fixing a scornful eye upon him and shaking their heads. The patriarch scolded them, "Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?" (Job 19:22). But they remained before him with the same shaking of their heads and the same stolid, indifferent faces. That's why he poured forth the unrestrained expression of the forsaken: "Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever!" (Job 19:23, 24). The visible continued to disappear before him. But it was then, like a bolt of lightning that comes from the east and goes to the west, he was invaded by one of those heavenly visits that are precisely of the coming of the Son of Man. Having lost all, an extraordinary strength lifted him to Heaven. The Patriarch exclaimed, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." (Job 19: 25, 26).

It is no marvel that after this radiance, he fell back into painful intonation, if we understand that it is in the plan of God to move us from the height of the Mount of Transfiguration, down into the valley where the critics, the travailed ones, and the bewildered disciples are debating. Every word of the text merits close examination: "Redeemer" (last helper), "Earth," "see God;" they are infinite horizons. But our subject is "I KNOW."

We ask ourselves: Did he not know before, since in the beginning of the book he is presented as a man who was just, fearing God and eschewing evil; and later, deprived of all goods and of his children, he blessed God. And still later, struck with boils from head to foot, he gave his wife who sneered at him, that noble answer that exhorts that we should accept all that God sends? There are two kinds of knowing.

But we will deal with this after we have said something about the second "I know"—that of St. Paul.

One who reads the second letter to Timothy—penetrated by the meaning with which it was written—has before him an old prisoner on the eve of martyrdom, that reveals in his wrinkled face (but always full of light) a long history, and that at one time had nourished a hope of great things in the visible. The Judaism in which the great prisoner had lived the first years of his youth, and which had offered him a noble career, had escaped him. But as a great counterbalance, a strong ideal had comforted and sustained him; an untiring activity had driven him in his missionary voyages, while disciples were being formed around him. But now, in prison, the picture is changed. Some have gone back into the world; others have forgotten him. He turns to the one who was like a son to him, to Timothy, and must almost litigate that he should not be ashamed of the chains of the prisoner; that, if others had misunderstood him, he, Timothy, at least was in a position to know the honest intentions. With an affirmation that sustains him in the dark hour, St. Paul writes (chapter 1:12): "For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

After the involuntary lament in the words of chapter 4:16: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge..." —again, another affirmation: "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me."

If we were writing a book instead of a periodical, this "I know" of Paul and of Job and of all the saints, would be a vast theme of religious psychology. But we must be brief. There is a "knowing" rooted in the spirit (Psalm 51:6) that

reaches the mind only after we have exhausted the supports in the visible. In an early time, a youthful zeal, an enthusiasm, a certain optimism, and the tangible blessings, drove us forward. Then, with the passing of time, two lines have stretched out and in inverse proportion. The visible support, even the visible religious support, has been diminishing until we have been left in disappointment and with painful questions: "On whom can we depend? How much? Who? And if there is someone who might comfort us, where is he, or will he remain for long? Is he impeded? Is he far?"

There remains the "ourselves." Ourselves? But our good intentions and virtues, little by little have been shipwrecked. There remains the Bible, the great Book, but which translation? Have I understood well? Which non-controversial doctrine? Turning our eyes to the past, all is disappointment and uncertainty. Delusions and delusions, and the saddest of the delusions is the "ourselves." We no longer have enthusiasm; the old zeal has left us.

But—but—thank God, while all has diminished, "One" has grown in us, above every delusion, argument, biblical study, and even if the Universe should be shattered. The ONE is more real—rather, He has come forward in the measure that we have diminished. Churches, agitated movements, are in ruin—there are problems of the mind. But all this was foreseen by the great Personage—that is, that in order to truly gain Him, it is necessary to suffer the loss of everything, including all of our pride.

Now we can no longer do anything—not even pray or testify. The emptiness is around us, in us. All is vain. But this is not vain: that before our spirit there arises a gigantic, granite-like Son of Man—Son of God. To those who ask us to explain about God, about the Infinite, about the churches and

the rest, we answer that we do not have the courage. We enter into nothing except this: Jesus Christ, Lord, has become a Reality, so that He alone has remained in us.

And the work for Him? This is it. Jesus loved and loves mankind; but He was moved only by and for the Father. We too, in Christ, for as much as He is in us, can love and serve. Let us love and serve Him in mankind. And before opening our mouth that would like to remain silent, and before stretching our hand that would not like to extend itself, we see Him. SURELY, ONLY JESUS CHRIST HAS REMAINED. "I KNOW."

.....

ACCUSING... GOD

You don't say! Accusers of God! Are there any? But of course there are, because all those who murmur and accuse, deep down, murmur against God and accuse Him.

From the sin of Adam and afterward, man—if not redeemed by Grace—is always ready to excuse himself and to accuse someone else; in conclusion, accusing God. Adam did not say the Lord had made him disobey, but "the woman that you gave me." Eve did not accuse God directly, but said that the serpent had seduced her. Not one word of repentance.

In 2nd Kings 3:10, the king of Israel said, "Alas! That the Lord hath called these three kings together (he was one of the three) to deliver them into the hand of Moab!" Up to here it can be said that it was, and it was not, an accusation. But when the prophet rebuked him: "What have I to do with thee? Get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the

prophets of thy mother..." the same king, without feeling compunction for the serious words of Elisha, repeated the same lament: "Nay; for the Lord hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab." (Verse 13). No repentance, no confession of sin, but murmuring and accusations against God.

If the Lord does not put the axe to the root—and He puts it if we want it—we are inclined in every event, without our even being aware of it, to make hurried mental reasoning of how we can defend, excuse ourselves and accuse others. This is one of the distinctions between those who are truly converted and those who are not truly converted. Those truly converted try in all things to examine their own part, and even when someone mistreats them, their first examination is if perhaps they might have given motive to the adversaries—or they may have been misunderstood—or they may have misunderstood others. They tremble for themselves; they see themselves always lacking or apt to be lacking.

As much as possible, they are defenders and excusers of others and never accusers, because even when they are outright constrained to say something painful, they do it with sobriety and never lifting their hand against anyone, even if it is someone who has done them evil. Therefore, they do not see evil in others—disposed as they are to discover the finger of Providence in everything. In chapter 12 of Revelation, it is said that the elect have overcome—they will overcome—the accuser of the brethren, because their life is a testimony of Jesus Christ who came to save and not to accuse, and because they—the elect—were and are identified with the Blood (Life) of the Lamb; they have no love for their own life up to the point that they risk it unto death. You, oh reader—you who aspire to the heights of the Kingdom of God—ask yourself each time, in every unpleasant event, if your heart is moved in a spontaneous way to feel something

against others—if your mind begins immediately to work as to excuse yourself and to accuse others. Or do you begin a severe examination of yourself, happy if you can find that the others are innocent or, at least not as much at fault as they seemed at first glance?

Accuse God? Is it possible that He would do anything that does not have, as a final aim, the good of all creatures? What concept do we have of Him? Do we know Him and Jesus whom He sent? Accuse God? And yet even the saints, at times, have wrongly lamented; we do not say that they have accused Him. It suffices to read the glorious discourse of Elihu, to understand that man must never justify himself, but always and only, the Lord.

David, the man after God's heart, in his monument of penitence and aspiration to holiness that is Psalm 51, has written: "For I acknowledge my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." (Psalm 51:3, 4).

In the school of the Holy Spirit, by which we learn to know the Father and the Son, we come to the reality of that which is written in Romans 8:28, and 1st Thessalonians 5:18: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." "In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you."

Murmur, accuse? We? No, no. We want to ask for grace so that "We will bless the Lord at all times, having His praise continually in our mouth." Amen.

.....

ELIAS MUST COME – ELIAS HAS COME

(Matthew 17:10-13; Malachi 4:5, 6)

Events follow events. Prophecies are fulfilled before our eyes and most of us do not see, or even seeing, we do not reflect upon them, because we are so crammed with theories that are either not revealed to us—because the Word of God is only that which comes to us directly from on high by means of others, but clearly revealed to us. Each one must be taught by God. This does not exclude the fact that under the direction of the only Master Doctor there may be master doctors; but it says that from whomsoever we hear, we must hear again and be confirmed then from Above, by means of the Holy Spirit.

One of the most debated and stressed themes in the churches in our time is about the return of the Lord. When Jesus came, there was an expectation; however they did not recognize Him, because they were waiting for Him with formed and accumulated theories. Even in our day, although in many places there is insistence on signs and on the second coming of the Lord, events follow events; the prophecies are fulfilled, but not as we have learned from others; therefore, they escape us. However, looking to the past, we can understand our days.

When Jesus and the disciples were coming down from the mount of transfiguration, they had already heard the warning to tell the vision to no man until the time of the resurrection; because it is clear that revelations have no value except for those who have had some experience of the resurrection. That is, they themselves have been resurrected in a lively hope. The surprised disciples asked the question, “And his

disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?" (Mathew 17:10).

The scribes say. They—the scribes—know all, and say! It is always the scribes who "say." But there are others who have the right and duty to say, and they are those who are taught for the Kingdom of God; they, the true scribes, extract from the treasure of old things, but they understand them in the light of the Holy Spirit that makes everything new. Jesus answered: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed (wanted). Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them." (Verses 11, 12).

There is a mystery—that the disciples did not ask any more of Him, nor did Jesus say anything else, at least not in that occasion. Later, He promised them the Holy Spirit which was to teach them in all truth, reminding them and explaining that which Jesus had said. Literally, according to Matthew 17:10-13, Jesus, referring to Elias, said that he had come, and that he must come first. He said that he had already come. The two affirmations, contradictory if read superficially, seem to say the same thing. But in the light of heaven, the words are not contradictory, nor do they refer to the same event. That which must come and has begun to come is announced first, and the next event is announced afterward. That is: Elias will come in a second coming: Elias has come in a first coming. We explain that John the Baptist, having come in the spirit of Elias is not the same individual, as if he had been reincarnated. No—John is one, and Elias is another. John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elias—that is, he was governed by the same spirit that governed Elias. The two ministries resemble each other, and both are preparatory. John (Elias) has come and has been

killed; they did what they wanted to do unto him. A few enjoyed his ministry for a brief time which was a burning and a shining light. Herod killed him; after they had done with him as they pleased, they killed him. Jesus added: "So it will be for the Son of Man." Elias has come, Jesus has come; neither one nor the other was known in reality. Elias came—will come: The disciples understood that Jesus spoke of John the Baptist.

Malachi is a history of ancient people and a prophecy of the Church. The mention of Elijah comes after we read of the remnant who spoke often one to another—a remnant composed of people who fear the Lord and think on His Name. The Name is Jesus. Churches, in general, are occupied with many things but very little about Jesus Christ, Lord. There are noble exceptions, but looking at the majority, there are activities and activities, programs and programs, discourses on signs and signs, mentions of antichrists; but little and in an uninteresting manner of Jesus Christ. A second-hand gospel (we admit exceptions) is preached, and not the simple story of Jesus Christ, a story that when presented by the Holy Spirit is always new and has teachings that stretch to infinity. There is the repetition "second coming, and second coming" and we cannot meet any scribe who does not repeat that we are in the last days, and that we are waiting for the Lord, etc. Are we indeed waiting for the Lord? If it is so, we must live in holy conversation and works of mercy, speaking of what we are thinking—that is, about the fear of God, about the Name included in That Name which is above every Name. We mean about Jesus Christ, Lord. But the words "has come" mean many things, among which is the revelation which requires grace upon grace (1st Peter 1:13). This revelation of the return of Jesus is preceded by the ministry of Elijah; likewise, John was preceded by the first coming of Elias. There is a severe ministry of men who fear neither the

Herodias nor the Herods, who know how to rebuke Scribes and Pharisees and all who boast that they are sons of Abraham; many boast in all ages. John the Baptist was needed *then*; someone is needed *now*—someone who resembles John the Baptist or Elijah. Not that one must go out of the present dispensation which is that of grace—no. The dispensation is respected, but a shaking is needed so that those who are sleeping may wake up, and the Lord—the light—will appear to them. Let us read now Malachi 4:5, 6: “Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

We cannot elaborate too much within the limits of this writing, and it would not be worthwhile because these hints are enough for devout souls, for the remnant who think on the Name. For others, we will not succeed in anything. There is, there must be, a powerful ministry that prepares the second coming of the Lord—the final one—and the revelations each time of the various comings—whether for individuals or for the church in general. Such a ministry is manifested, partly in an explicit way and partly as in a veiled manner, in the pages of the scripture, especially in that little-read book, or read as a mass of curiosity, a book which was directly ordained from Above—we mean “Revelation.”

In Revelation, after the long preparation through which St. John had passed, the two witnesses of chapter 11 are portrayed. After St. John was measured, he was commanded to measure the temple (true adoration), the altar—that is, how Jesus Christ is presented, and to measure the worshippers—that is, what sort of worshippers they might be. The outside is left out and two personages are introduced who are clothed in sackcloth—that is, they themselves are

penitent while inviting others to penitence. They are courageous because they fear only God. They have fire in their mouths, because God is a consuming fire and answers by fire.

These two witnesses are the sure and precise prophetic ministry which must represent the Person and Personality of Jesus Christ Lord in a live manner. It is a powerful ministry which serves to prepare souls to meet the Lord. It is the ministry of Elijah. It is like a rising again of John the Baptist who prepares souls so that they may see Jesus. They see Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (the general message for the masses and includes the disciples) and then they see Him as the "Lamb of God." That is, they study and contemplate the Lamb in order that they, those who listen, may become like lambs; they become so identified with Jesus Christ as to become an extension of Him, of the Savior-Redeemer.

This, and even more than this, can be drawn from the brief words of the Lord. Elijah must come; he will come. From time to time there have been courageous prophets who have preached like the two witnesses, and Jerusalem has killed them. He will come; He must come, especially in times of great crises. Elijah came and Jesus came the first time: they killed one and the other. Jesus will return, no longer in humiliation, but in power as we see in the preparatory picture in the first chapter of Revelation. No longer will they kill Jesus, but they will kill His friends. Elijah must die; John the Baptist must be killed, because it is not possible that any prophet, if he is a prophet of God, should die outside of Jerusalem. Jerusalem, Jerusalem that killest the prophets and...

The times are enlighteners of many things that happen before our eyes. They did not see John the Baptist as Elijah. They

do not see the true servants of Jesus Christ today, who are like Elijah. Few saw; few see. Let us close, praying: "Lord, open our eyes, so that we see Thee and the marvelous things of Thy law." We speak of the law of the Holy Spirit. Oh Israel prepare yourself to meet the Lord your God. Amen.

.....

FAITH WITH REGARD TO THE PEOPLE

James 2:6)

The example given by St. James of partiality toward two who come into our assemblies, illustrates but does not exhaust the subject. In fact it is not in the plan of wisdom that the Scripture should exhaust subjects, because it is the Holy Spirit who must explain and extend. The words in the text warn not to have a faith that is changeable—a little down, a little up, according to the faces of people, because it is undeniable that the aspect of people exerts an influence on us more than we can imagine. We must have quite another Personage within us in order not to be agitated and moved before the gaze of others. We have seen individuals—even some who fear God—who, when alone with us, have spoken in one way and they seemed impartial; but afterward, in the presence of others, they have vacillated or said the contrary. Therefore, even for this, it is necessary that we cultivate solitude with the Lord, and also the communion of others. When we are before others, we verify how much we have learned one on one with the Lord. We are heroic and holy when we are alone, but what of us when we are in contact with others?

The faces of others alter our faith if one is not rooted in the Lord. Before enemies or those who are lukewarm, and before

those who suspect us, we either lose our frankness or we speak in a provoked manner. We don't have the heart to take food, whereas the promise is, "Thou preparest a table before me, in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." (Psalm 23:5). In the presence of a trustworthy and benign countenance, we feel courageous to speak and to pray if the sickness is not serious, but we feel quite otherwise in different circumstances. And yet we deceive ourselves—we have deceived ourselves—that we had faith. But faith is to act in the dark, without paying attention to faces or circumstances; having become deaf and blind to the visible, immersed in The Invisible, not taking our inspiration from faces, events, or circumstances, but from God alone.

.....

THEY HEARD THE VOICE – THEY DID NOT HEAR
THE VOICE

(Acts 9:7; 22:9)

"And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man." (Acts 9:7). Paul, in giving the report of his conversion—many years later—said, "And they that were with me saw indeed the light; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me." (Acts 22:9).

They heard the voice, like a sound. They did not hear the voice of Him who was speaking. They did not understand whose voice it was and did not distinguish any word. One can hear a voice without knowing to whom it belongs. But

Paul heard the voice of Jesus, recognized it, and was blessed by it.

The sheep of the Lord listen; they discern His voice; they know that it is He who speaks. And in the words, they hear the voice, and behind the voice they distinguish the words. Blessings are promised to those who hear the voice of His words.

.....

THE KEY IS IN THE WILL

(John 7:17; Proverbs 8:8, 9; 16:1)

When we read in chapter 16 of Acts that the Lord opened the heart of Lydia in order for her to understand the things said by Paul, we must not forget that which is written in precedence—that is, that Lydia disposed herself to listen. “...heard us” implies a disposition to hear before understanding whether or not what the apostle was saying was from above. Because, let us remember it, Lydia loved the Lord according to the light which she had, and served Him the best that she could. She had never heard speak of Jesus Christ but was faithful to the light that she had, and was open to hear always more of what the Lord would have to say. Those who fear the Lord are open to learn and to know Him more and more. They do not set limits to stop at that which they know, refusing to receive more. Let’s understand, it is not that they must accept novelties if they contradict what they have clearly learned—No. The Lord adds and does not destroy; He enlightens and does not confound. Every knowledge prepares for subsequent

knowledge, just as each obedience prepares for another obedience.

Lydia was listening. She did not accept immediately, nor did she refute it. Even then, there was no scarcity of false prophets and of false doctors; human prudence could have dictated to guard against strange persons. It is true that we must be on our guard, but it is also true that charity does not make us ready for doubt and distrust—rather, we want to see and to find good everywhere. She was listening and the Lord who saw the good disposition, gave the answer to the inner question of her thirsty soul.

In the book of Proverbs, in chapter 8, there is a long message on Wisdom. In verse 8 we read, "All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing forward or perverse in them." That is, the words which are equivalent to deeds are justice, because it is understood that they come from the mouth of the Lord. There is nothing that is said in them that is wrong or perverse. They are "right" in the source, and are presented with simplicity and clarity. But the reader can object; that's why the Wisdom which sees and foresees everything adds. "They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge." These are words to meditate which result easily to the well-intentioned. Others—those who contradict—stumble at the word of the Lord. The two affirmations "straightforward," and "right" (New American Standard Bible) refer to the source and to the method, because the Lord has not only the Way, but likewise the Ways. Blessed are those who love the Way and the Ways of the Lord—that is, the Truth and the method that the Lord has for leading us to the Truth itself. The words are "straightforward" for the one who understands, and then they turn out to be "right" for those who have found knowledge. If they are not first accepted as straightforward, they will not even be recognized as being

right; nor will knowledge be found—that is, true knowledge in that which is from heaven. It is necessary that first they be accepted as being straightforward; the rest comes afterward.

But only those who have understanding, see that they are straightforward. It is necessary to understand what is meant by “those who understand.” Some other passage of the scripture—precisely in the parables—may help us with this. The seed that falls by the wayside and is devoured by birds is explained by the Lord to be the word that falls into hearts that have no understanding. That is, those who do not hear attentively and do not reflect; they do not consult together and they do not meditate. To understand, therefore, is meditating, getting together, reflecting, and drawing conclusions. This requires a good disposition. Having accepted the principle, one is on the way to knowledge. Wisdom is within the reach of all who want it, because the Lord is not partial, but He gives it to whomever asks for it (James 1:5). The key is in understanding, reflecting and meditating after one has begun to hear and to listen. We recall the insistence of the true messenger of heaven sent to Job before the Lord God spoke directly to the patriarch. “O Job, hearken unto me; hold thy peace.” But we have more abundant light on the subject if we hear the words of Jesus—especially those that are reported in John 7:17. They are, “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”

Let us consider: “If any man...” (the appeal is to all those to whom Jesus Christ is presented, but only a few listen). Therefore the “If” which is so expressive, and the “any man,” make one suppose scarceness. The difficulty is not in the appeal, but in the “If any man...” What is required? This: That the “any man” wants to do the will of God. He does not impose on an individual that he must do such will from the very beginning, but that he have the good intention of

obeying it. An emphatic and energetic translation is: "If any man intends (decides, *truly* decides) to fulfil, to obey His will..." The key to knowing is in the willingness to want to want. The repetition is done on purpose, because the enemy tempts by whispering to us that we do not want in a perfect way, and we answer that if we do not know how to want as we should, at least we want to want. Delicate meanings such as these are in the word of God. At the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus said to Martha that if she wanted to believe, she would see the glory of God. Wanting to believe, wanting to obey, wanting to know. Wanting leads to understanding, desiring, asking, receiving, and knowing. Simply wanting to do the will of God leads to the certainty that the word of Jesus—His doctrine is from above. This is the process of heaven. The appeal begins by asking that we hear, we listen, we consider, and that we want. The rest comes afterward. God is faithful. He who begins the good work, takes it to fulfillment. Reader, let us—you and I—begin to want to immerse ourselves more and more in the will of God. Amen.

.....

SLAVE OF WHAT? OF WHOM? OF SIN OR OF
GRACE? OF JESUS CHRIST OR OF SATAN?

In Romans 6:14 there is the struggle between two forces: that of sin, of the tendency to sin—and of Grace. In Galatians 5:18 there is the same admonition and promise, defining what it means to be under Grace. In conclusion, one must be under someone.

We know that theories are not lacking, some based even on verses that are isolated and not harmonized, which say that since the root of sin is "uprooted" (this is one of the terms

used), certain dangers are averted. So some say, but the facts, in their harshness, deny the theories. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," thus warns St. John, although in other words. "Sin," in this sense is not transgression—sin as an act, but in power—that is, in the strength that it has to make us transgress. This strength to make us transgress remains in us until the last breath in these mortal bodies, because the saints are and were tempted even on their deathbeds, even if in nothing other than in the vanity of knowing how to die a good death. The promise in Romans 6 and in Galatians 5 is conditioned.

We give the word of one of the most able and delicate translators of the Scriptures: "For sin shall not have (will not be able to have) dominion (absolute lordship) over you: for you are (you have put yourselves and remain) not under law, but under grace." For "under the law" we understand the law of Moses and, by analogy, all our efforts and programs based on our strength and good intentions. Sin, the tendency to sin has strength until it is conquered by a greater strength, by the Grace of the Lord. The strong man must be assailed in his castle by the One who is stronger than he, and held down so that he cannot inflict harm; and he cannot harm while one remains under the dominion of the One who is truly strong, of an absolute and eternal power. All power is given to the Lord. This has been said once and for always, but we must hear it again and again in order to be confirmed (Psalm 62:11). We ask ourselves, who is the one who places himself under the absolute dominion of Grace? We answer that it is only one who has finally lost all trust in himself. But, one who thinks that he can fall in some things and not in others and is able to go ahead now that he has received the Grace of the Lord, incipient Grace, and having begun with Jesus, he can continue in human strength, alas, he is exposed to unforeseen evils and to attack by subtle demons against whom he does not know how to guard himself, and cannot

guard himself, because the astuteness of the devil is more insidious than any human awareness. Read again Ephesians 6:10-20. The Lord and the apostles have insisted on the danger from Satan, and therefore we must never take off the armor of God. In war there is neither rest nor leave. In this conflict with the power of darkness, the greatest danger is precisely after a victory and in prosperity. The end of the law and of every human effort is Jesus Christ (Romans 10:4). One who enters into rest, which is the same as saying that he abandons himself, like one who is dead, to Jesus Christ and depends on Him, minute by minute—that is, he waits for Grace for everything, in his mind, in his mouth and in his actions, such an individual has confessed that he has no hope in himself, except in this: he has no hope and has no program except to have no programs but to consign the government of himself to the One who runs the Universe. Such an individual always says, “I am weak, I am capable of any evil.” In every accusation or suspicion he asks himself if it is he. Such an individual consigns himself as a perfect and voluntary slave to Jesus Christ. He says, “Lead me not into temptation...” and the thought is, otherwise I will fall—not because I want to fall, but because I have no strength to remain standing.”

These are a few suggestions of the meaning of being under the dominion of Grace, because our life must be a chain of graces. In Galatians it says that one must be *continually*, not only in the beginning, but always, under the absolute guidance of the Holy Spirit.

A question: Do we know the strength of God, by means of the Holy Spirit, a Strength that penetrates and invades the intimate parts of each one of us in such a way that it knows how to bind us and imprison us so that we do not fall into evil? What strength, oh my Lord! Great is the power of the

enemy, but much greater, oh my Lord, is Your power, if I abandon myself to it.

The weakest one becomes strong because he knows that he is weak, and therefore, takes refuge in the Strong One, and becomes strong in the measure that he feels weak—rather, feels himself to be nothing.



GO TO THINE HOUSE

(Mark 2:11; 8:26; Genesis 14:14; Nehemiah 3:28; Ezekiel 1:12)

“House” is one of the sweetest words of the human language, and the refuge where the pilgrim retires from the struggles of life, to pull himself together and catch his breath. God is our House; the Church is the House of God. To understand and to enjoy the promises of Heaven, we must evaluate them not only in the great general lines but close up, in particular lines. The Holy Spirit points to the heights and then—to the one who pays attention—the steps of slow ascent.

We want to occupy ourselves with “house” in the sense close to us because, in theory, we are in agreement on the vast and generic meaning—in fact, it is in the practical lines, in the immediate steps that we fall short. Losing ourselves in that which is little, or neglecting it, we lose sight of, and will not reach the great things.

The words to the paralyzed man of Capernaum resound to the ear of our heart: “Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto

THINE HOUSE.” The healing—which was truly surprising, accompanied by a vigor which would have been unusual even for one in good health, and by which that man was able to pick up his bed and go away—certainly attracted attention. But the surroundings were not for the paralyzed man. The crowd, some of whom were simply curious, and the scribes who were always ready to spy and to cavil, were not the territory suited to the forgiven and healed man. “Go unto thine house.” The words mean more than his domestic dwelling. The Lord knows how to particularize and translate into practice the commands which He continues to give us.

The other event is in the same gospel of Mark (8:22-26). A few persons, as if to protect this blind man and to recommend him, brought him to Jesus; but the Lord noted something in that little group, and His first action was to separate the needy man from it. After the first experience, the blind man looked and saw men walking as trees, and after Jesus put His hand on him, controlling him, He made him look up and he saw clearly. Then the Lord sent him away to HIS HOUSE, saying, “Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any man in the town.” Sending him away to “his house” and the prohibition about the town, have one purpose—that is, to deliver the man from any suggestion of protectors who easily become lords of the souls; and to make each one know his own sphere and what God wants.

This writing is not against being charitable; rather it encourages us to be charitable. We must love and pray for everyone. However, each one must know his place and where and with whom he can and must work. “ALL” is the perfect companion of nothing; there is danger in generalizing. One who boasts that he knows how to do “everything,” informs us that he knows how to do nothing. One who says he prays for “everyone,” and tries to absolve his prayer life with the easy words: “Lord, help everyone...”

and he does not SEE the individuals while he prays—such an individual has not prayed at all. That which is too general, evaporates into nothing. The Christian is called to practical holiness which is composed of days, counting them one by one (Psalm 90:12, and to acts which seem insignificant but which have unforeseen results. And to a walk which takes one far but which is made up of small steps one after the other; and to universal love which begins where God places us, each one in his own house. One who faithfully begins with a little, will arrive to “much.”

“To thine house!” “Neither go into the town.” These are precise commands that point to actual duties. Ephesians 2:10 is brought to mind, that we are called to walk in the works that God (not we) has prepared for each one of us.

There is much generalizing and vagueness in the churches; therefore, we have many theoretical and impractical Christians, and many who begin well and then grow tired. Let each one put himself before the Lord in order to know from Him where his “little place” is, his limited sphere, and await guidance from Him day by day. The big things, which are continually more enlarged, will come by themselves when we have attended to the little, nearby things that have been entrusted to us.

Our contrite memory reminds of many hasty activities which we thought would do much; but we did not conclude anything—rather, we caused grief to ourselves and to others. We want to correct everybody, and we provoke, because authority and grace come only where and when and for as much as the Lord commands.

Abram, in fighting the kings, gathered not strangers, but those born in his own house. In restoring the ruins of Jerusalem, it is recorded in Nehemiah 3:28: “From above

the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house.”

The cherubims seen by Ezekiel walked straight ahead, one before the other.

Do not misunderstand us; the heart of the saint becomes enlarged always in a greater love and is always more and more concerned, stretching out afar; but it is always the Lord Himself who enlarges and stretches out, and He does it in the measure that each of us goes to and is in his own house. It does not say how big this house may be or how many people it may contain. It becomes enlarged like the tent mentioned in Isaiah 54, in a progressive enlarging of itself and of stretching out, taking one step forward, while the other is quite firm. Considering men and things in a charitable aspect, no one can deny that the Christian—even the most sociable—does not feel equally free in all houses, even if they are better and holier than him. If he is a preacher, he knows that he does not feel the same liberty in all assemblies. This is not because the other houses are not holy, or the other groups are not of the Lord. Often they are better than we are, but they are not our house.

St. Paul, in Jerusalem, did not have the liberty that he enjoyed elsewhere. It was not his place. Interpreting in Universal Charity, let us pay attention to begin where the Lord wants us to begin: Each one in “his own house.”

.....

SIN FOR NOT DOING

(James 4:17)

Thus said St. James: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is a sin." (James 4:17).

Years ago, someone gave me a message that I still remember. It had been revealed to him that I should have occupied myself in explaining some scriptural lines, and since I who loved solitude and to spend time in contemplation rather than in spiritual conversations, began to defend myself, he said, "We are our brothers' keepers." It was the same as counseling that we cannot hide the talent we have received.

I have often reflected that many times we sin not for doing, but for not doing, when it is given to us to say that certain good word that can be pacifying, or to accomplish a certain action that can be of help; and we, keeping to ourselves, remain silent or inert, going to the other extreme of those who, without a command, are always ready to do something when and where it is not necessary.

The law of the Spirit is delicate, by which there are responsibilities relative to what one knows and can do. Often, after that time, in moments of anguish or in the midst of disturbances, I have heard a voice in my spirit, at first sweet and then imperious: "You are responsible, because you know how to act in this circumstance—how to explain. Pay no mind to your own tranquility." And, against my will, I had to intervene, to speak, to act, because the words of St. James were striking me. It is a sin for one who knows how to

do good and does not do it. Alas, how many sins along this line! Let us meditate and ask for opportune Grace.

.....

HE PRAYED EARNESTLY...

(James 5:17; Luke 22:22-44)

One notes the information, not given by chance, that Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are. Just like us, because the saints were and are like us, of flesh and blood. In order to keep themselves before the Lord, they had to decide firmly, and never were to be terrified by various obstacles that presented themselves, among which is our perception of ourselves, by which the enemy, when he does not succeed to make us become proud, tries to throw us into dejection, making us look at our weaknesses, or worse, at our failures. To abuse the Grace of God is sin, and a great one, if we sin voluntarily—that is, in thinking that the Lord is Good, and therefore He will pardon us. He pardons, but we must not tempt Him in sinning with the premeditation that He pardons. We mention this briefly, but we do not develop this interesting subject further because there is confusion about “voluntary sin.” Our theme is prayer and discouragements.

Elijah, although “SUBJECT” (and this word is weighty), to the same “PASSIONS” (and this word is also weighty), yet he prayed—that is, he did not look at himself but to the faithfulness and to the Power of the Lord. We insist on “YET HE PRAYED,” instead of losing courage to the point where he would stop praying. He had to be persevering, because curled up with his head between his knees and fasting as he

was, he prayed, and six times he heard the report that the heavens were like brass, until the seventh time when he heard that a cloud similar to the hand of a man appeared on the distant horizon. Then he arose affirming that rain was imminent; and the rain came.

Above all examples is that of Jesus, the preeminent man of prayer. He lived and died, praying. We read of Him in Gethsemane: "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." (Luke 22:44). Being in an agony, He did not stop, but prayed more intensely; He gathered that little bit of life that remained in Him and continued in prayer, in tears and in supplications. Great Lord! Let us remember that He affirmed that He will not cast out whoever goes to Him. And He did not set limits, because the limit is not in the mercy of God, but in our faith—a faith which must be constant and feel more sure of itself in the most difficult times and when the enemy tells us that we don't deserve anything. And the compassion and the mercy of the Lord shine with more luminescence in contrast to the poverty and misery of man. It goes without saying that this is on the condition that we abide always in Jesus and we never want to abuse Him; rather, we do our best to live according to His heart, loving, seeking and obeying His will. Amen.

.....

THE NUMBER OF THY DAYS I WILL FULFIL

(Exodus 23:26)

We invite the reader to read, to meditate Exodus 23:20-26. In addition to the various promises, there is this: the Lord will

fulfil the number of the days of one who shall have loyally remained under Heavenly Guidance. One of the fears that torment the most is that of death, especially if one is immature. And yet, the Lord carried not only the weight of our sins, but also the sense of our infirmities and weaknesses, and in the great sacrifice, He has redeemed us also from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:15). We want to be practical, and say it is even the fear of leaving this body, let alone the terror of the beyond.

Many are assured of the beyond, but live worrying about their physical health, and are continually alarmed at every symptom of sickness and announcements of death. Such is not the will of God. Believing, accepting the Redemption even from FEAR, every form of fear, one who believes and binds himself to the Lord with an Amen to His affirmations, experiences even this side of Redemption: liberty from the fear of death. How long is one's life? It is not said, because it does not consist of the years, but in the fulfillment of the plan of God for each individual. Those who are violent and disobedient have their years shortened; those who live according to Heaven, finish their course and are happy to go when the end has come. We read of some who died full of days, which implies that they would not have liked to prolong them. The number of years was not the same for all; Abraham lived 175 years, Isaac 180, Jacob 147 and David only 70. Without speaking of others, we mention only Stephen, who passed from this life by a violent death, a blessed martyr of Christ. But all finished contented with a goodbye to the past, finally embracing that which God had prepared.

.....

NO SHEPHERD

(Mathew 9:36)

“But when He saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.”

One of the sculptural passages of tenderness: Jesus was moved with compassion, as if feeling the viscera cut up. They were not emotions that stir externally—not shouts, and then, not even crying. But it was an intimate, compressed feeling which from the depths, rose to His throat and manifested itself—only as a gleam of light in the few words, eloquent not only in the literal sense, but much, much more by the profound tone of His voice.

It involved a multitude who had “religion.” Please understand—we use the word in the popular sense, because “religion,” in the true sense, expresses the relationship—a double bonding (re-ligo) between man and God. There was religion and certainly, orators, preachers, exhorters who imposed burdens; and many others—but no “Shepherd.” That is, someone who would take care of each one as if he were the only one, and all of them as if they were one—and would guide them, feed them, protect them, and help them until He would gather them into the fold at the end of the day, watching over them by day—and placing Himself as a wall by night, in such a way that no enemy would reach them except by passing over the body of the Shepherd.

Alas. There are so many—so many! But they are not Shepherds. Therefore, let us hear the invitation that tells us to be converted to the Shepherd of our souls. Amen.

.....

WHERE IS HE THAT IS BORN KING OF THE JEWS?

(Matthew 2:1-12)

How many days they may have traveled, we do not know. The last visitors to the Baby Jesus had come from afar. These unknown ones, called simply "The Wise Men," were moved to visit Jesus because they had seen a star. They came last, but they made the greatest sacrifice. They offered gold, incense and myrrh.

"Where is the King of the Jews that is born?" They were not Jews; they expected to find Jerusalem feasting. "We have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him." The question reveals the long expectation of the trip. "Finally, we are here," it seemed they should say among themselves. "It is here, in the center of Judaism that we will see the King that is born. We have come..." As if to say, we too, although non-Jews, have seen His star."

There is an eloquent silence that says neither how much time they had been watchful, nor anything of the preparations for their trip, nor of the trip itself, But their enthusiasm encountered a sepulchral chill. They were strangers in a strange city, and were received icily.

King Herod, when he had heard this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. The question about the True King who was born, disturbs the false one and the earthly Jerusalem which has always courted the usurpers.

The KING THAT WAS BORN was not expected in the city that was officially religious. That is because He wants a people who is also from Above, suited to that Kingdom, the

pure Laws of which, by His work, are caused to be born in the hearts of the subjects of the Kingdom.

They had the Scriptures, and they hurried to investigate them. All the chief priests and scribes of the people were gathered together. Herod was informed as to where the Christ should be born. The answer came in a clear manner: "In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."

The little town of Bethlehem is a few hours distant from Jerusalem. We should expect to read that that assembly of religious men, followed by crowds of people, should move en masse, in order to accompany the strangers in search of the King that was Born—but nothing... To Bethlehem. Have a good trip! And the Wise Men go out of the city and not without having the astute usurper make a recommendation to them: "When ye have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was."

Here—a very noteworthy mention: "When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy." Therefore, for a time, they had lost it! They had left the direct guidance from Heaven. They had entered, hopefully, into the religious city, in order to have more light... There is no true light in the carnal Jerusalem where man has taken reign over the heredity of the Lord—there is only agitation and persecution. They rejoiced with exceeding great joy, as it happens with those who find again something they have lost. It is Jesus, the true star, who guides us to Himself. Thus comforted, and having been placed again under the guidance from Above,

they reached the destination of the trip. "And when they were come into the house (take notice: entering into the house; how much prophecy there is in that entering into the house), they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down (oh! The expectation of the long trip, and the delusions! How much there is in that "falling down"). And fell down and worshipped Him." They had not left their treasures elsewhere, but they were taking them to the "KING THAT WAS BORN." Take care, because where the treasure is, there is the heart. And when they had opened their treasures which were brought with love, and were guarded from thieves in the long voyage, "They presented unto Him gifts: gold, and frankincense and myrrh."

Going to Jerusalem to ask for enlightenment was a mistake. They had a painful experience and later, innocent children would have to die. Our mistakes cost. The Lord, certainly, turned the martyrdom of the innocent little ones to their good. But the lesson remains: It is detrimental to leave the star in order to ask for help from men in the earthly Jerusalem.

They will not pass through that city again. Enough! Herod, the priests, the scribes will not see them anymore. "And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way." (Oh the varied means of Providence!)

There are two great lines and an intermezzo. Accompanied by the star, up to Jesus! In the long pilgrimage, the error of having confidence in men. Having arrived to Jesus, they are ready to take up their walk again in order to return to their own country which is the image of the rest of our life, from the time that we have met Him. Brought to Him, in order that then, led by Him by means of experiences that are always new, we are led little by little without meeting either Herod

or the earthly Jerusalem anymore, and we are brought finally to the country that He has gone to prepare.

.....

OBSTINACY

(James 3:17)

We must distinguish, because it is possible to qualify as constancy and faithfulness, that which is stubbornness not to want to learn what has been discovered by others rather than by ourselves. And it is possible to qualify as obstinacy that which is firmness and constancy in not wanting to give in to human passions, as to want to make everybody happy and become changeable.

The first condition is sin. The second is praiseworthy holiness, and is to be encouraged. We learn to distinguish and to give each word its right meaning and its application, case by case.

There are those—and they are not few—who approve only that which is up to the level which they have reached, and that (to speak of some of them) was worked on their anvil; or that after having affirmed something, then they are ashamed to change, because (so they imagine) they are people of character.

Please permit us: “You have changed your mind; you are not stable in your opinion,” said a certain one to his adversary, who in other times had favored the death penalty

and then decided to vote for its repeal. "You are not firm in your opinions."

And the other, in retort: "Yes, I have changed my opinion, because I have discovered that I was in error. Only brutes do not change their opinions!"

Obstinacy is the equivalent of weakness of little minds.

"You have won," said an ancient saint, a great philosopher, to a poor old man who had witnessed to him about Jesus. The philosopher, at first was resisting and mocking; whereas, the saintly old man continued. But at a certain point, the philosopher became attentive and serious, and finally exclaimed, "You have won." "No; you have won," answered the Christian—"because you have had the grace to surrender yourself, and you are not obstinate and proud." Only the Infallible One is unchangeable. Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). But we must not remain the same. We must grow. There is so much to learn, and from everyone—and so much to be corrected. From stature to stature, the food becomes more substantial, the Scripture becomes enlarged—and we see that which we did not discern before—until, annihilated in ourselves, we say, like Job, finally we have seen God. And this, notwithstanding having received pardon and so much more. Seeing God is death to our obstinate, proud, vain "I."

But there is a praiseworthy firmness which should be encouraged. And it is firmness in having, in conclusion, only one Father and Doctor, even though accepting that there are fathers in the faith (1st John 2), and doctors. Hear everyone, but wait for confirmation only from Above. This is humility and constancy—humility in a good disposition, and character in a firmness to remain where one is—in what one is—until the cloud above us moves and says to us: "Forward!"

Someone used to repeat often that part of verse 17 in James 3: “The wisdom that is from Above is flexible. (King James: “easy to be entreated,” New American Standard: “reasonable”). It does not say inconstant in the holy resolve to please God. No—because we must be constant in such a decision until death. But it says that for the righteous, the light keeps growing; the Lord teaches us according to what we can hear; He waits for us and prepares us for an advance toward the New Jerusalem, from station to station (Hebrews 12:18-29).

What then? How then shall we distinguish when it is the Lord who wants us to change or if it is the enemy, or our own heart? We suggest it is from this: all that drives me to hold firm my “reputation”—not to fall from the esteem or position before men (even in the churches) is STUBBORNNESS, and is the daughter of vanity and pride.

Instead, that which brings me to see myself always more miserable, until I am nothing, to discover good in others, and to see everything and everyone only in God—everything to everyone—this is from God. The fruit makes us know the tree. David desired to build the temple (2nd Samuel 7). Nathan approved. God spoke to Nathan and Nathan spoke to David. Neither the prophet rebelled to contradict himself, nor did David. These were two true saints.

.....

SLAVE OF THE SEVENTH YEAR – PERFECT SLAVE

(Exodus 21:1-6; Romans 1:1; Ephesians 3:1)

In reading Romans 1:1, I was impressed by the words that Paul, bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, was “set apart,” (New American Standard Bible) having been set apart, separated, kept in reserve, to announce the Gospel. The word in the text, translated “separated, set apart,” is the same as that used in Luke 6:22, and which is translated “excommunicated, driven away, expelled.” The light came into my heart, that no one can truly serve the Lord—be His perfect slave—if he is not, in a certain sense, driven out from other surroundings. He may not necessarily be expelled literally, but this will happen in the spirit—we mean to say without having it said clearly that he is not wanted. In fact, the deepest separations and excommunications happen without words, or clear words, because they are implicit even in certain silences. It is not written in the letter that the citizens, moved by hatred, sent a message to the Noble Man (a man born well—that is, One who has come from heaven) that they did not want him as king. There *was* a message—a silent one, and it was a revealer of hatred. “Set apart” for Jesus Christ means to be excommunicated by those who do not love Jesus Christ. And now we will say something on the words “perfect slave,” in order to distinguish it from the “slave” who, although being such, has not yet entirely consigned himself to the owner in the absolute sense; he does not want to, and cannot, hear except that which is in the voice and in the words of the owner himself. There is a slavery that goes beyond any description, because it commands and regulates the impulses of the soul—the thoughts, the affections and all the secrets by which one places himself before the Lord in order to obey Him not only outwardly, but in the innermost regions of the soul where only God reads. Such is the perfect slave of the seventh year;

he is the true prisoner of Jesus Christ. It does not say that there cannot be temptations and conflicts in the soul of the slave because temptations and conflicts will endure while we are in these bodies. Furthermore, it is in the plan of God that they should be, precisely to make us understand always better, what man is in himself, and what is in the man who lives under Grace.

The temptation and the victory, death and life, evil and good are near one another; in the contrast, we learn to depend less and less on ourselves until we no longer depend on ourselves, and more and more on the Lord, until we depend completely on the Lord. The various emotions, the outbursts, at times as of rebellion, come even to the most saintly, but they are dominated by the Grace of God. The perfect slave suffers the temptations, he hears the many voices; however he distinguishes among them and voluntarily says to himself, "I am no longer the boss even to think anything or to say my own words. I belong to another; and therefore, whatever my personal impressions, preferences, sympathies or antipathies may be, I must listen to and obey only the voice and the word of my Master. If He commands me to go where I, of myself, do not want to go, to help whom I would not want to help, I must obey Him because even that which is in my hand, and that which has been given to me, and that which I am, is not mine, but all is His."

And now we make a distinction between slave and slave—the one of six years and the one of the seventh year. May the Lord help us to understand in order to live from today on as perfect slaves—that is, of the seventh year. Let us read in Exodus 21:6: "Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever." He serves only six years because he must have the opportunity to choose between going away or remaining

with his master. The Lord wants us to serve Him wholeheartedly and freely; He loves a cheerful giver. "Six" is the number of man; "seven" is a symbol of perfection. In the seventh year, after having completed six years, if the servant desires, he may go, but he takes with him that with which he came. In the words of an ancient saint, he goes with the suit with which he came and in the company with which he came. That which he has acquired in the master's house, he must not take with him because it is another's. But—"And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free (verse 5)..." that is, if he says plainly, truly affirms in an unequivocal and serious manner in the saying that does not allow doubting and that is demonstrated by his behavior rather than merely by words—if he energetically says..., then something else happens which regulates the future relationship between him and his master. We have examples of such "plain speaking" in the Scripture. Ruth the Moabite said clearly to Naomi that she did not want to separate herself from her; one of the warriors who followed David in the flight from Jerusalem said clearly to him that he wanted to follow him at whatever cost. Read again 2nd Samuel 15:19-21. Note the noble and decisive answer of a stranger, of the Philistine Ittai of Gath to whom David wanted to grant freedom, and how this stranger (from whom according to the visible, it would have been least expected) showed so much devotion. Above all, consider the energetic response of Peter (John 6) in the words: "To whom shall we go?" Let it be clear that there is a time that the Lord puts us to the test as to whether or not we want to continue with Him, and then if we clearly say that we want Him, the conditions from that moment on are more precise and exacting. If we understand this, we will understand some distinctions in the churches between people and people and between one time and another in ourselves. But let us return to Exodus 21. The servant has clearly said that he wants to remain, and has declared his reasons. Let us

read it in verse 5 because it is never too much to meditate: "I love..." In the list—and this is beyond human relations—he begins by mentioning his master and not his own family. Take note of this. However, words are cheap; therefore there is a sort of judgment in which everything is diligently examined. Nothing is frivolous or by chance. The servant must appear before the Judges. The word "judges" is translated by some as "God." That is, he appears before God. In conclusion, the one who judges is the Lord. An ancient version says: "to appear before the judgment of God." Sacred words! The slave is made to approach the door (there is much in every word), right at the door-post, at the entrance. Then his ear is pierced with an awl—a seal in blood. That hole in his ear was saying that he, now, was known as a perpetual servant even by others. Bound more tightly to the house of the master, he had made a vow that from now on, more attentively than in the past, he would hear the voice and the words of the master—only His voice and words and not those of others—and he would obey. He had "served" in the six years but all had not understood that he was a servant. Not so now. If from now on, someone would have wanted to attract him, he would not even need to explain or to protest, it being enough to show what was already visible—that hole in the ear—in order to say and to repeat, "I am no longer my own in any sense; I am a slave forever."

This new relationship is prophetic of the Church and of the Lord Jesus Christ—we are speaking of that which the Lord builds and against which the gates of hell cannot prevail, although they torment and persecute her. Everything that belongs to the servant is the master's, and the master provides all that is necessary for the servant, and defends him if necessary. The servant lives by the day, without premeditating of providing, having only one care: to hear, to obey. In a sense, he is at rest from all that is personal, and is

immersed in Another. Now we are in a position to understand better the words of Jesus to the twelve when the multitudes and even some disciples (Jesus had many disciples besides the twelve) left Him. It was a time of crisis and of decision—therefore, the invitation if also the twelve would want to go away. There had to be a distinction from one people to another people, from one group to another group, from individuals to another group of individuals; and in ourselves, a precise separation between the past and the “from now on.” The crisis revealed a growing light, because the question constrained them to reflect. Another “time” had begun for the apostles. From that time on, the movements of Jesus and His relationship with the multitudes changed. There were no more great crowds, but their numbers increasingly diminished; the teachings about the cross are repeated with more insistence. It is a continual going toward Jerusalem because Jesus, like a resolute helmsman, directs Himself toward Jerusalem and all of His movements aim at a single goal.

The prophet must die; every prophet must die in Jerusalem. The disciples, in certain moments, although frightened, followed—but they followed. They had had to decide. Speaking about ourselves, there is a “From Now On” in the life of every elect one—if he is elect; there is a precise separation from a past, also blessed and not yet confirmed, definitive, toward a future. There are shakings upon shakings in us, not only earthly ones that are easily accepted, but also heavenly ones, so that we discover other heavens and rise from height to height. That is, from crucifixion to crucifixion—until we are outright as dead resurrected, and our life is entirely hidden in Christ, and we can neither say nor do anything precisely because we are in Another. Only when this Other manifests Himself, can we manifest ourselves in glory—that is, show not ourselves, but Him in us (Colossians 3:1-4). This is enough for us, and we close

with the words of the same apostle who qualifies himself as a slave and prisoner of Christ, set apart for Him (driven out) to belong to Jesus Christ. Paul testifies (2nd Corinthians 5:16) of a “henceforth,” whatever the past may have been. That is, from that time on, his relationships would be only through Jesus Christ, and even the knowledge he had had of the Lord was undergoing an advancement. From the material facts of the letter to the spiritual and prophetic interpretation, to a conversing face to face with the Lord Himself and to have His word, henceforth, sculpted in his mind and in his heart. We too conclude: “Lord, we love Thee and want to be Thy servants—slaves forever. Amen.”



IN THE HOUSE OF THE POTTER

(Jeremiah 18:1-6)

After years of exertions and experiments, a few of us, finally begin to understand that the work cannot be mended, but must be remade. And in this regard comes the lesson that the Lord gives us by means cited in Jeremiah 18:1-6. We do not like to hear that we must be destroyed in order to be renewed—pulverized, to be built up as lively stones of the New Jerusalem. We marvel that they crucified Jesus, while we many times afflict Him by our resistance to being renewed by Him. We do not want to understand (and pride prevents us from doing so) that the Lord does not begin with multitudes but with individuals; and the few who are well-taught (to say it better, converted) are used by Him for the multitudes. The religious movements as well as all that which has had importance in humanity, began with a few

individuals who, like martyrs, had to dispose themselves to persecutions and contempt.

“Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words.” Thus said the Lord to Jeremiah. It is easy to read the prophets and admire them; meanwhile we crucify those who want to lead us to the heights of the Kingdom of the Spirit. It is so in all times: We praise those who have passed away and crucify the living.

“Get up,” or “Arise,” points to resurrection—a new beginning—and there must be, in every Christian, a new beginning for new heavens and a new earth. “And go down.” It is pleasant to go up, but not to go down, to lower ourselves down to the dust. Here in the house of the potter, in a humble place, if we are informed of those times and places, they worked with very primitive methods; the potters were poor and uncared-for people. It is here that the great lessons are learned.

“Then (continues the prophet) I went down to the potter’s house and behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.” Remember the wheels near the Cherubims seen by Ezekiel. The movement of those angelic beings was not in them, rather in the wheels. Jeremiah continues: “The vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter.” We note that the vessels were not always damaged, but that was a special lesson for a special reason; therefore an example is taken from an act that to the superficial eye seems to be an error. But we are in quite another situation of another Potter and another vessel. We are in a territory where we cannot walk with shoes on our feet nor use human methods of reasoning. Whatever we think of that potter, the fact is that the vessel was marred right in his hand. It does not say that perhaps this may have been the result of a defect in the wheel or in the quality of the clay. We learn a lesson—and it

is a great one—not to blame events and persons (at least not lightly) but to see in everything, in everyone, the cause of all causes. That is, to consider the beginning of every beginning. “Brethren,” says St. John (1st John 2)—“I write... an old commandment which ye had from the beginning...” Permit me to explain. The vessel was marred in the hand of the potter. It was neither the fault of the clay nor a defect in the wheel. The potter, without a word or impatient act, took it upon himself to continue the work. “And he made it again (made it blessed again) another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.”

But then, we ask ourselves, did he not have the drawing of how the vessel should turn out? Remember that we are in the territory of the Spirit, where things and people are not studied by the thread of human logic. We have before us the Creator and His creation; and we learn things—they are presented to us—not according to how they are in God, from eternity, but how they begin to appear to us. They seem to be illogical and arbitrary for a time, until it is given to us to begin to understand the infinite Wisdom that does everything, always with order, weight and measure. We need another mind in order to understand. In the meantime we must, by faith, accept the ways of the Lord. That which we do not understand now, we will see clearly later. Patience and humility are necessary. In the meantime, let us accept the words: “As seemed good to the potter to make it,” remembering the words of the One who affirmed, referring to the Father: “For so it seemed good in thy sight.” (Matthew 12:26).

The clay mass that had already undergone work on the wheels was an inert mass and, therefore, did not complain for being exposed to new torment. And perhaps it had to undergo more purification in order to be refined. That potter knew that the inert mass, in order to be reshaped in the form

of a vessel according to the pleasure of the artist, had to be put on the wheel over and over again.

“O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? Saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.”

We say, “You, oh Church—if you are that Church—spiritual Israel—thus are you in the Hand of the Lord.”

Thus—like the clay—deformed on the wheel, then thrown to the ground, then gathered up—the same material by the same hand, and on the same wheel, in order to become, finally, a vessel according to the heart of the potter. Like the inert clay that does not rebel, so you, oh Christian, dead to yourself, placing yourself on the altar, must remain in the hand of God. He knows your past. Do your part—confessing and humbling yourself; as for the rest, abandon yourself to Him. Don’t say that the former days were better, because the same Lord who has blessed you in the past, now wants to renew you; He does not want to patch, but to throw you to the ground; He wants to pulverize you in order then to make you new, as he pleases, as He wants you to be formed. He has always wanted it, but has waited that you should first be thrown down—in order to remake you.

“Make me, I pray,” said the prodigal who was no longer proud; rather humbled.

God created Jacob, but afterward—crippling him and blessing him—he formed Israel.

.....

I N THE COUNTRY OF EXILE(Psalm 137:1-6)

Years ago, someone observed the following: Near a large courtyard in a big city, he was attracted by a confused loud voice and by a few scrapings of the violin. In the center of that space, there moved with strange leaps, a tall figure who was covered by something I would not know how to describe—whether it was a mantle or other. Observing it, it was a patchwork of rags—a certain something that went from the neck down to his feet. This human figure was raising a poor violin from which, by disorderly touches of the bow, there came out, not music but strident sounds. From that tall thing whose head seemed cadaverous, peered two sunken and half-spent eyes.

He was a beggar who was entertaining spectators by playing, if those strident sounds can be called playing—jumping, making the strange mantle flap, uncovering two long, thin, almost-naked legs. And many were laughing—even from some windows. Some were not laughing, but were watching mutely. An occasional coin that fell was quickly gathered, and the jumping and the strident sounds of the violin resumed. In this manner, the man-spectacle was begging for a little bread.

But noting the pallor of those cheeks and those poor half-spent, sunken eyes, and the whole of that miserable figure, a spectator, and not even a very sensitive one, was more apt to cry rather than to laugh.

Bear with us. Certain memories are stamped in our heart and they follow us. Another scene: This is taken from the Scripture, in Psalm 137: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We

hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

Some Jews in exile, taken by rich Babylonians, were, we imagine, employed to play and to entertain in a time of feasting. The masters required them—the tone and inflection of their voices we do not know—to sing the songs of Zion. Perhaps, unknown to those who were exiled, the masters had surprised them while they were singing.

But that time, those who were exiled were not able to sing or play. Overcome by anguish, they hanged their harps on the trees and they sat down, crying. That time, more so than usual, they remembered Zion, and because of this remembrance, they could not sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land, in Babylon. If their hearts had not been as if suffocated by sorrow, they might have been able to sing other songs; but those of the Lord—in that place—asked in that manner—as to entertain—oh! They could not.

Sing of the Lord in Babylon? How can one? It is true that one can sing even in Babylon, but there cannot be harmony, the melodious voice that comes from the center of one's being. It is a song adjusted by man. It is an art that may even impress, but with a cold light; it is not the voice that comes from the heart that burns with feeling and inspires the same in others.

Whether it was at that time or later, we do not know; but they pronounced a vow—that is, that they would never forget Jerusalem, otherwise their tongue would remain mute

and their right hand would become inert, unable to do good. Alas—this is what occurs in those who, even if they have cried on some occasions, forget the benefits of the Lord and are not occupied with Heaven—with the New Jerusalem! By a display of human ability, they can chatter and sing, but it is not the song and the voice of the Spirit.

SIGNS OF THE NEW BIRTH

(John 3:1-5)

Without coming to controversial lines, and still reaffirming the unshakable conviction that without the guidance and the continuous presence of the Holy Spirit there is neither Church, nor Bible, and (let us also say it) there is no light at all on Jesus Christ. Taking care to use a method against which there can be no argument because we do not desire to provoke discussions which embitter, confound and do not enlighten, we say that the eloquent proof that one is born again, born from Above, is in the fact that he, without entrenching himself behind biblical verses, demonstrates and feels that his aspirations and affections are toward Heaven. He aspires to, lives in, the Kingdom of God. Such an individual has in himself the definitive proof, the approval of that which is eternal and immutable.

That anyone may have such sentiment without the Holy Spirit is an illusion because in man, leaning on himself, there is no capacity to understand the things of the Spirit. (Read 1st Corinthians, chapter 1 and 2 again). One who lives for Heaven will become always more sensitive to sin. He becomes more scrupulous every day, however, without being discouraged, because the painful discoveries that he will

make in himself will not surprise him since he does not expect anything from the flesh, but everything and always from Above (John 3:27).

Such an individual will not misuse Grace. However, while he sees himself always weaker and without merit, others—those whose eyes are open to the good—see him as being more holy. He diminishes in himself down to nothing, but grows in God. In a word, he feels himself consciously a sinner, and more of a sinner because by intuition, he sees and perceives the sin and the law of the Spirit in an always more scrupulous way, and likewise becomes, without his being aware of it—holy and more holy.

.....

THE LORD JESUS CHRIST: OUR HOPE

(1st Timothy 1)

Now abideth...these three things: “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” (1st Corinthians 13:13). But without hope one cannot remain either in faith or in charity, because as it is written in Romans 8:24: “For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” That is, we are nourished by hope that does not confound—that is, it is stable if the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by means of the Holy Spirit. Unfortunate is one who has no hope, because he feels an emptiness around himself. The Lord, if we look to Him,

renews in us a lively hope. The Resurrected Lord, imparting waves of resurrection to us, touches us again and again with hope. However, after various experiences and disappointments, even the best-intentioned seem to fall short. And it is then that we are led by the Grace of the Lord to appropriate the goods of the Lord Himself—that is, in our poverty—trusting in Jesus Christ, we are encouraged in Him, having become “OUR HOPE.” We see nothing in ourselves, but He is at the throne, and lives to intercede. And we say to Him: “Thou, Lord, art our hope.” AMEN.

.....

TWO QUESTIONS AND TWO ANSWERS

“Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee’s children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him. And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, We are able. And He saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.” (Matthew 20:20-24).

We should meditate the questions and answers of the Scripture, when there were any, because many times there

were no answers, but the Holy Spirit gives them in the measure that we are brought to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom. An example of questions without answers can be found in Luke 2:49: "And He said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Now we are occupied with the questions of the mother of the sons of Zebedee. A degree of relationship was involved and therefore, we can understand and excuse a certain pretension—if the word "excuse" is permitted us. The mother inquired, but Jesus did not answer: "What are you asking?"—but "What wilt thou?" There is a difference between asking and wanting—or rather, desiring. We ask for something, to which, in a sense, we have a right, and there is no doubt about the answer. We desire something which we have no right to expect, and for which we must put ourselves in another's hands. The answer of Jesus is enlightening. That is, that often we do not know what we are asking.

We must thank the Lord for the answers and for the times that He has not answered us, because we did not know the effects of our asking. The Lord added a question: "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall I shall drink of?" Note the word "able." They answered that they were "able," and they were sincere, but they did not yet know how to distinguish between being able and being carried by the sovereignty of God where we cannot go of ourselves. In the question of Jesus: "Are ye able?"—it is implicit that if one "can," then he can also choose and ask; whereas if he cannot, he must depend on Grace, which alone knows how to choose for him. They said that they were able, but the Lord replied that they would drink of the cup and would be baptized with the special baptism to which Jesus was alluding—a baptism of suffering and of agony—but it is clear that this would come about not by any strength in them, but by the sovereignty of God, and therefore no one can choose places, but it is in the

power of the Father to give them. “For whom it is prepared of my Father.”



RESURRECTION AND POWER

(Heb. 1:3; Mark 6:14; Eph. 5:14; Col. 3:1-4)

“...risen—therefore ...”

Let us read them—the words of this wicked Herod, in Mark 6:14—because therein is a great truth. In fact, many of the truths regarding Jesus have been pronounced by His enemies. They did not equivocate on the affirmation about Jesus, that He is the Son of God. The enemies informed that He received sinners and ate with them; and it is an enemy who affirms that only one who is resurrected from the dead is invested with the power of God.

Not that Herod understood what Resurrection may be, and what the Power of God may be, but the Holy Spirit has often taken the mouth of wicked ones, as that of the innocent ones, to glorify the Lord. The Holy Spirit illuminates the words of Herod, and uses them to edify those who like to be edified. That is, in everything, in everyone, they recognize teachers to enlighten them about the things of heaven. Blessed are they who recognize the Lord in all the ways.

Another observation before beginning the subject. The things of God are the patrimony of the Church (of His Church). It is

not humility (ours) if we limit God. The great life of Jesus wants to extend and multiply itself in the elect. It is humility to say that without Jesus we can do nothing, but it is faith and confidence to add that we can do all things in Him who strengthens us. He is everything, and we are part of that Everything; He, the Head—and we, the members, who must function in harmony with the Head and among themselves. Let us remember it. As Jesus has been in this world, so must His Church be. Alas, often certain unctuous and false humiliations are none other than excuses for wanting to remain in our carnality, contenting ourselves with a veneer, and not the reality of Christ. To serve Jesus, truly, to be His Bride, costs something in the beginning, and it costs everything before we come to the end of the course.

Referring everything to the Lord is dutiful and good, provided that we ask Him to give us grace to walk as He walked. He is not on the earth, but His Church, becoming His Body, must represent Him. "And King Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead." (Mark 6:14-16).

He erred in saying that John had risen, but not in saying that the powers were working in the risen one. The important thing for us is to meditate the words of Herod and apply them to ourselves without regard for why they were said. For us, they are saying that only the dead in Christ and resurrected by Him—only they—are partakers of His power, a power that includes the powers of the world to come. We do not deny that the Lord may have worked and works by means of many who are not dead-resurrected. For the

purposes of His Providence, He used even a Balaam and uses many, but that is not a true representing of Him, the Lord. Some Scriptures will help us: In Colossians 3:1-4: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." We read that those who are resurrected, live in heaven as in their city; they think on things above, they are as inert, without life in themselves, and move, act, only when Jesus who is their life, acts and moves in them. This is to the glory of the Lord Himself, and leads to think not to the one who is being used, but to the One who is using him. This is the Power that works. That is, it does not uplift the servant who is hidden but the Lord who moves the servant. In one sense John the Baptist, in his time and for as much as was given to him, did not need literally to die in order to uplift Jesus. The Baptist was like one who was dead to this world; he lived in the deserts, he nourished and dressed himself poorly; he did not even say his name when he was asked who he might be, but qualified himself only as a voice that is heard in the desert. He lived for One alone. In his time, within his limits, he was like a dead-resurrected individual from another world.

We ask ourselves in what manner the Powers worked in the Baptist, and we have the answer, even if only as a simple illustration of that which is written by one who knew him well and who had been his disciple, before being sent by the Baptist himself, to Jesus Christ. Let us read in the Gospel according to St. John, in chapter 10, verses 41 and 42. We note: John performed no miracle. Many of us, being superficial, stop only at visible miracles and forget, or do not know, that the Lord prefers that we believe in Him by His word. Believing because of something visible is a believing

of secondary, not of primary importance. The powerful believing is in being attracted by His Word, which is to say to the Person and personality of Jesus Himself. Little do we know Jesus Christ Lord.

John performed no miracles, but was used in the greatest of all miracles under heaven. He witnessed of Jesus. He said (and here it means that he portrayed in an effective manner) he spoke of Jesus in a way that the souls who accepted his testimony, went to Jesus. If we do not want to concede such going to others, we cannot deny that some disciples of John the Baptist went and remained with Jesus. This was the verdict of those who on seeing and hearing Jesus, and being in good faith, said spontaneously that the Baptist, the most esteemed man of that time, had spoken of Jesus, but in what manner had he spoken! In the heart and in the mouth of the convinced witness is the firm word that convinces the hearers who are disposed to hear. But there is more. In Ephesians 5:14 we read: "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." These are energetic words addressed to the Church to remind her continually of her high destiny. Everything around us moves in some direction; where there is not the One who is Life, everything moves toward death, so that many walk in this world as being already dead. Remember the words of Jesus on a certain occasion, to let the dead bury their dead.

The saint walks and moves surrounded by death, by dead people, useless discourses, things that are worthless; therefore, he himself is in danger of being contaminated and of dying. A poisonous sleep begins to take hold; but the "Watchman" shakes him, at times with some great pain, and shouts at him: "You are among dead people, and are in danger of dying," and exhorts him that while he has time and a little strength, to make an effort. Not waiting for others to

take him, but he should get up again, rise—the “Watchman” shouts to him: “Arise from the dead.” Then he will have no fear, because Christ, who is life, shall give him light.

Then there are the divine powers in the one who is dead-resurrected. The Holy Spirit works in a definitive way, so that man disappears and only Christ Jesus Lord is seen. The Power works, if you suffer the loss of all things for love of Him.

But we ask ourselves what the supreme manifestation of power may be. We have some light in reading Hebrews 1:3: “Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

“Word of His power...” Jesus Christ Lord is the Word, Expression, Character of the Father. In the Resurrection, all power has been given to Him in Heaven and on earth. After having affirmed this, He said to the disciples: “Go, therefore...” Men like resurrected ones would proclaim the Resurrected One.

God *said*, and the light *was*. He says, and creates. “Say the word,” the centurion supplicated, “and my servant shall be healed.”

The message to Saul of Tarsus—the future apostle Paul—promised that, among other things, he would hear a word from the mouth of Jesus.

And we pray: “Speak, oh Lord, to us and make us dead-resurrected, living only for Thee, glorifying Thee and speaking only of Thee—how, when and in the manner that Thou wantest.” Only in the great Dead-Resurrected One and in the dead-resurrected ones, the Powers—the true Power—

works. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:35). "Word," the maximum expression of the Power, creates the image of the Son in us and, by means of us, in those who listen if we, resurrected, truly speak of Him.

.....

JUDGMENT OF THE PEOPLES – JUDGMENT OF THE
PEOPLE

(Psalm 96:10, 13; Acts 17:31; 2nd Thes. 1:8)

God is just. Blessed be His Name who, by the Holy Spirit, continues with open face, revealing the Father to us. He loves us. One day we shall confess that He is just. Such a day begins in this pilgrimage for those who love the truth and are freed from opinions, even ecclesiastical ones, when such opinions slander the Sovereignty and the love of God.

Liberty costs and it is attained by means of sufferings in the school of Jesus Christ. We often meditate on John 8:31-36, and we note that even among those who had believed—of a first believing which often is superficial—even among them, there were those who were offended at the words: "If the Son... make you free—ye shall be free."

God is just and there is no iniquity at all in Him. Let us read: "Say among the heathen that the Lord reigneth; the world also shall be established that it shall not be moved: He shall judge the people righteously... Before the Lord: for he

cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth.” (Psalm 96:10, 13). Distinguish: “He shall judge the world (the outsiders) with righteousness, and the people with His truth,” or according to other versions, “in His faithfulness.”

The Judge is the same, but the measure of His judgment is relative to one’s knowledge—we mean also the opportunity that one had to know Him. Whoever refuses His gospel when it is presented to him by means of one who is sent to present it to him, he is responsible for it. But, in order to create responsibility in the hearers or non-hearers, it is necessary that the messenger be sent, directed, measured, from Above. No one, by his own judgment, can go about creating responsibility in others. “If I send...”

It is certain that witnessing about Jesus is owed to all the world; but it is also certain that it must be directed by the Lord Himself, by means of the Holy Spirit. Many run, and are not sent, attributing to themselves a commission which they have not received, or for which they have not been prepared at length. Such individuals do not gather with Him; they scatter and do not gather. That is, they do harm.

In Acts 17:31 we read, “Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.” Here again the announcement, and it is an echo of the Psalms.

In 2nd Thessalonians 1:8 we read, “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In this last verse, a heavy word is used: “vengeance,” and the connected idea is also to “vindicate,” to reaffirm His Sovereignty. Implicit is the idea of “judgment.” 2nd Thessalonians 1:8 considers two peoples:

“Them that know not God—and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Those who are disobedient to the Gospel do not know (do not want to know) God. Those who do not know God, according to the verse, have never heard the Gospel.

Let us explain. The word “know” has various meanings, beside the one referring to mental illumination. In the verse in question, it means “to accept, to have a relationship, intimacy.” When Jesus says to the foolish virgins and to the workers of iniquity (Matthew 7 and 25) that He does not know them—did not know them—it does not mean that He was ignorant of their names and of their history, but He does not have—did not have—a relationship with them. “Those who know not God” of 2nd Thessalonians 1:8 are those who have resisted and have refused the natural light—let us call it natural religion. It is true that no one is “saved without Christ,” but “the Light which lighteth every man is Christ.” (John 1:9). Therefore the judgment of the people depends on their refusal or acceptance of that light. God is Just. Justice—Justification—says that the Creator took upon Himself the destiny of His creatures and provides the remedy for their salvation, if they want it.

Not to know God means to refuse the inner light, the voice of the conscience. According to that light and the manner in which it is and was treated, is and shall be the judgment of the peoples.

We repeat: When the Lord sends the message of the Gospel to them, they pass from one responsibility to one which is quite a bit more serious. But until they have the evangelical message (and let’s repeat it) how, when, in the measure, by means of one who is commissioned to give it, they are in the first responsibility and not in the second. When I hear some persons who describe the Creator like a tyrant who,

according to them, would let loose in the abyss millions of unfortunate ones if they do not run, I shudder with pain and think of my—of our—responsibility, because we have had the privilege of the Gospel, and are truly more responsible.

But—the Missions? But—the Church? These are serious problems and they have their place and development in the Wisdom and Providence of God. He has missions—He gathers the Church.

We cannot delineate many subjects in one meditation. It is enough for us to say that those who truly love the law of the Lord (and in the word, His voice is also understood—Jeremiah 7), are not offended in any way. They know that God does all things well and that He is Just.

The words of Psalm 119:165 are comforting: “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.” **THEY LOVE HIS LAW**—eternal law—His voice—the guidance of the only Master—they have peace—much peace, who resist against waves and agitations, and are not offended by problems and by how they must be resolved.

To know God! Do we truly know Him—of an absolute knowing even according to the intellect and the heart? Alas, even the most holy have known Him only in part. Let no one be offended. Read in Philippians 3:7-14 how delicate it is to truly “know” of an intimate knowing, and how many renunciations are needed in order to truly know Christ—Jesus—Lord, and to be identified in Him.

But He who is Just, will judge and judges, by means of the Man-God—God-Man, the outsiders and the insiders; the first, according to that little light that they have; the others, according to the Gospel, in the measure that they have had and have wanted to have it revealed. Blessed Lord, Thou wantest that we know Thee. Thou hast said, and say: “And

this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.”

.....

EXTREMES; THOSE OF LYSTRA AND THOSE OF THE FUNERAL

(Acts 14:8-20; Mark 5:38-40)

Until such time as the Lord should deliver us, we are all apt to exaggerate, going from one extreme to another. Let it be clear that exaggerations are harmful to the truth we think we are presenting or defending. May the Lord give us a sober mind, so that in everything we can have weight, number and measure in Him.

Two incidents will help to make us see some extremes; but there are many others. In the fourteenth chapter of Acts we read that in Lystra, Paul was guided to command a lame man to stand upright on his feet; and the lame man leaped and walked. The crowd, having seen this, lifted up their voices, saying in their tongue that the gods had come down among them in human likeness. They called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius. The impression was such that the priest of Jupiter brought oxen to the gate to sacrifice them. The apostles rent their clothes, and ran in among the people explaining that they were not gods, but men subject to the same passions; and they evangelized that they should be converted from these things to God. Those of Lystra were not Jews, therefore the apostles appealed to that which we

can call natural religion. They succeeded with difficulty in restraining the people from offering sacrifices.

Another scene in the same city, and among the same people, because especially in those times, the event mentioned above did not remain privy to few, but interested the entire population. The Jews, always obstinate persecutors, arrived and persuaded the people against Paul; and they stoned him, and drew him out of the city thinking that he was dead. "Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city."

We have cited the incident in order to show the two extremes: Gods—Impostors. The people of Lystra passed rapidly from one extreme to the other, in a reaction so much the more manifest for as great as the illusion had been. The masses are eager for spectacles; the masses had been as if deluded by the protest of the holy men, and they did not forgive them for this, as soon as they had the opportunity. The persecutors having arrived, those of Lystra became their agents. The man who had rent his clothes precisely because he had refused divine honors was stoned as if he had been a blasphemer.

Another incident. It is tied to the deed of the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus. When Jesus came to the house of Jairus, He saw the tumult, and those who wept and wailed greatly. We note "He saw." Literally. A tumult is heard, but "seeing" is used to indicate to us that Jesus knew the cause of that tumult. He said to those who were making an uproar and to the wailers, "Why make ye this ado and weep? The damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." Why? Jesus knew it. It was the custom of the times and of those places (a custom that we too have seen in certain places) to pay some people to show deep sorrow at funerals; we mean, a sham of deep sorrow. Human vanity has not respected even the holiest sorrows,

and has penetrated the house of sorrow and the sepulchers. To the affirmation that the girl was sleeping, there was a reaction that led to the other extreme. "And they laughed Him to scorn." Easy to cry—make-believe crying—and easy to laugh.

Alas, such is man—the most noble of all creatures, and the most abject. Noble if he obeys the high destiny that wants him in the image of the Lord; abject if he refuses this destiny. When good is corrupted, it becomes the worst.

Jesus put them all out, and took with Him only the ones who were truly in sorrow, the parents, and only the ones who were able to be present at the resurrection of the girl, the three disciples: Peter, James and John. False and scornful ones must not be present at the great work of resurrection. It is in vain to testify of the great things of heaven to one who does not want to recognize his own misery and that he needs the Savior. We have often erred on this point. I remember two incidents in which I was an eyewitness. A servant of the Lord was speaking of the return of Jesus, and there was present a man of the world—and we say "world" not to condemn the outsiders, but we speak of the spirit of the vanity of the world. That individual, a happy man according to the flesh, began to say in a scornful tone that that encounter would be a great feast. But the man of God, having become stern, answered: "Feast, but not for you. For you, something else." The other grew pale and began to tremble. It was the message that was needed. A servant of Christ was telling about a great miracle that happened to him, and the hearer was laughing as if scorning. Let us not profane the great things of heaven, presenting pearls where we should not, but may the Lord always guide us.

.....

EXTREMISTS IN DOCTRINE – THE SUM OF THE
WORD

(Psalm 119:160)

No one can deny that many contradict themselves and, alas, often tear each other apart, each one insisting on a special point of doctrine. This is not new. Many know of the long and persistent fight, and never conclusive in favor of only one side, between “Predestination and Free Will” and in our time, between “Completed Work and Progressive Work,” and many other lines of thought that are too numerous to mention.

Often, those who contradict each other are good men with holy intentions, and this results in harm to the sheep because while the shepherds are arguing, the wolf slaughters the sheep.

Someone—and he is a cultured and pious person—pointed out to us that by accepting a certain line of teaching, difficulties are encountered. We do not deny that there are difficulties; but we say that by accepting some lines of thought to the exclusion of others which are also scriptural, greater difficulties are encountered.

In the vast camp of the Spirit in which we are still children, and into which we have barely entered, it is dangerous—rather, it is absolutely damaging—to want to pontificate in an absolute manner. We do not mean to say that we should not have a sure language because it is necessary to have a sure language. We mean to say: affirming our ways of thinking and excluding others. Let’s understand each other: there are lines of thought that should absolutely be excluded

and others that should be affirmed. We mean to say that such absolutism among those who truly honor and love the same Lord wholeheartedly is a dangerous proceeding. May the Lord bring us into equilibrium.

THE REMEDIES

One remedy is not to extend ourselves into doctrinal trivialities by intellectual exercises. God feeds by giving us bread daily—food in measure, at the necessary time. Another remedy is not to make of the Bible an object of contention or a curiosity shop. Only the One who has dictated it holds the key, and administers it only when and as much as necessary.

Never define in an absolute sense, because the Word has great extension; that is, it becomes enlarged in the measure that we grow.

Never depend, as we might say, upon threads of logic, because the logic of Heaven is different from that of humans. Accept all of the Counsel of God, and not one part, and understand that Truth is in the Sum (Harmony) and not in part of the Word.

IDLE QUESTIONS (OR OUT OF CURIOSITY)

“Then said one unto Him, Lord are there few that be saved? And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” (Luke 13:23, 24). We note how the Lord ended the conversation abruptly in reference to a question asked out of curiosity. In the answer, He wanted to say, “Pay attention to yourselves.” There are many idle curiosity questions, and they distract from Jesus Christ—rather they bring ruin. An example: Can one who is baptized with the Holy Spirit perish? Answer: Know if one is truly baptized with the Holy Spirit, and say thus: “The one who abides in Christ and Christ abides in him, cannot live in sin.”

There are questions that are not scriptural and it is not prudent to respond to them. In no place is it written whether or not one who is baptized with the Holy Spirit may perish or not, but it is written that the one who abides in the Lord (a continual abiding) is secure. It is not written if the sheep may perish in whatever condition it finds itself, but that, staying in the hand of the Shepherd, it cannot perish because no one can pluck it out of that hand. The essential condition is to be a sheep, to hear—therefore to obey—the voice of Jesus, to flee from the stranger. In such a state, one is secure. We cannot be wiser than the Lord, and we never make a mistake when, led by the Holy Spirit, we answer with His words. One who loves God—that is, keeps himself in the love of God—has victory. Love casts out fear. Where there is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, there is no fear.

Some ask because of intellectual vanity, or because they hide something sinister in their heart. The very fact that they ask, at times concerning the punishments, the future, is proof that they have not truly consigned themselves to the Lord. Imagine the Bride of Christ addressing such questions, if she

is a Bride! But it would be offending her to suppose that she is preoccupied with condemnation, whereas she lives only to please the Bridegroom. Even one moment that she does not feel His communion, she is in travail. She lives only for the Lord, and occupies herself only with Him.

THE CHILDREN OF THE STRANGER

(2nd Samuel 22:46; Psalm 18:44)

NOTE: We recommend that the reader read again the above texts—and then accept these words entitled “Children of the Stranger.” Such is the true translation. To the subject:

In the Song of Solomon we read about “the children of my mother.” They are the zealous ones who are moved by authority and proselytism. They have lorded over the Shulamite for a time until she separated herself. But more dangerous than “the children of my mother” are “the children of the stranger.” The stranger is none other than Satan, presenting himself in the Scripture first under one title, then under another. He has children. There is procreating of the flesh and procreating of—or in—the spirit. Evil procreates evil; the devil—Satan—procreates little devils and Satans in those who imitate him.

Vanity, pride, astuteness, serpentine subtlety, and finally arrogance. We are all tempted. But there is a great distance and separation between being tempted and being dominated by the satanic spirit. Such individuals—as tares—are scattered everywhere. Where they cannot openly dominate—

in front of men who have their heart toward the Lord as did David (the Psalm is David's)—they pretend; they simulate obedience to the Word and arm themselves with lies. But when they are discovered, they flee elsewhere, where they hope to exercise their influence. They are arrogant with those who are weak and inexperienced—and trembling and cowardly before those of Zion. The hypocrites cannot feel comfortable in Zion (Isaiah 33:14, etc.). Alas! How many are truly Zion—or in Zion? Very few—but there are some. Not being able to remain in Zion where they are discovered, they move elsewhere, always pretending where they cannot dominate—arrogant where they are given free rein. Sometimes proud—and sometimes cowardly. Infamous—always!

Rejoice, oh reader, you who are Zion, or inclined toward Zion. Evil has a limit. The wicked cannot endure. The Lord visits His city, from morning to morning, from light to light. Do not obey the children of the mother. Be not afraid of the children of the stranger! Fear and serve God.

INCREASE OUR FAITH—IF YE HAD FAITH...

(Luke 17:5, 6; John 11:40; Romans 10:17; Hebrews 12:15)

“Then the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.” (Luke 17:5, 6). “THEN...” as if to observe that they, at

the stature to which they had arrived, were not so great as to forgive one who might sin seven times in one day and would return seven times saying, "I repent," they prayed, "Increase our faith." As if to say, "We have faith but it is not sufficient." The answer of Jesus, like all His words, puts the axe to the root and, in conclusion, means: "You do not have faith." Such is derived from the "If ye had..." The emphasis is on the word "had," in the meaning of possession of that which is absolute property, and therefore is available to be used at all times.

Therefore the disciples DID NOT HAVE faith, because if they had had at least a little, they would have been able to accomplish extraordinary works. Therefore, the request "increase," that supposes the possession of a certain quantity, is in error; therefore, it is necessary to pray in another way. Let's meditate!

"Faith" is a gift of God, whether it is in the general line of elementary faith, since without it, it is impossible to please God, and one goes ahead from faith to faith; and whether it be as a special gift, among the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit, by which powerful operations are accomplished. But this faith is a gift, given to those who are disposed to believe. The responsibility is in the disposition; the answer, the favor, is from Above.

It does not say that Lydia, the seller of purple, had faith; but it is written that she disposed herself to listen, and therefore the Lord opened her heart to believe. If she had not begun to listen, disposed herself toward that which was good, she would not have believed. Our relationship with Jesus begins with a sense of justice, admiration and gratitude for that little that we see in Him, because at the beginning we see very little. Faith and drawing near to Jesus go together. One who draws near to Him, demonstrates that he wants to believe in

Him, and one who believes draws always nearer to Him. Before the tomb of Lazarus, to Martha who had remarked that there would be a stench, Jesus answered, "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). In the ancient tongue, the word has a shade of thought that our language cannot give with a single word. "IF YOU WANT TO BELIEVE..." That is, if you are disposed to believe, you will see the glory of God.

Whether Martha believed or not, Jesus had decided to bring Lazarus back to life. The words to the sister go beyond the present scene, and are a vast promise to the souls who, renouncing the artifices of their mind, voluntarily, as simple children, are disposed to believe. In whom?

Romans 10:17 says it. The publicans and the sinners—all those who have lost confidence in themselves—are attracted to Jesus, to hear Him (Luke 15:1). This leads to faith, because it follows hearing Him. He speaks, and the word of His mouth creates faith. "Come," Jesus said to Peter who, at the sound of that voice, moved and began to walk on the water. He heard—he believed. He turned his gaze and attention away from Jesus, and he began to sink.

To us it seems that the reprimand "thou of little faith" refers to the fact that Peter did not remain intent on Jesus, because in this consists the perseverance in the faith. The translation of Romans 10:17 by some is noteworthy. It is: "Therefore, our faith originates from something heard, and that which is heard by means of a declaration (opening) of Christ." The true translator, interpreter of the Sacred Scriptures is the Holy Spirit.

Faith is victory. One who believes conquers. Believing in God is a great word. I believe, so I will succeed in knowing. It is not the knowing that leads to believing. Peter, speaking

in the name of the others, affirmed that they had believed (first) and were sure (knew subsequently) who Jesus is (John 6:69). Many do not believe. The cause is in their heart; they do not want to believe and they do not dispose themselves to believe. What honest man can call the invitation of Jesus arbitrary, since He promises light to those who follow Him (John 8:12)? One begins, but does not remain, in the dark.

The verse Hebrews 12:15 is noteworthy: "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled." "Root of bitterness springing up". It is the echo of that which is written in Deuteronomy 29:18. Let us read again also Hebrews 3:12. "Evil heart" that wants to remain evil—therefore voluntarily unbelieving. The asp, in order not to hear the music, presses one ear to the ground, and closes the other, I believe, with its tail...!

Rather than repeating "Increase and increase..." it is wise to obey, beginning immediately with the little that we have heard. We must ask for grace to appreciate and love more and more the Powerful and Merciful Personage who has died in order to justify us and is at the Throne in order to lead us to complete Redemption. Loving—hearing Him (He wants to speak to us). Faith will come by itself, and we will ask for grace for obedience—going from faith to faith and from grace to grace.

DEATH: REFUGE OF THE JUST

(Proverbs 14:32)

Let us read the words of the text in order to understand them in a measured way, avoiding applying them where, and to an extent, that we ought not. They are: "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death." (Proverbs 14:32). "Hath hope in his death" is also translated "takes refuge in death." In Isaiah 57:1 we read, "The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come." Let us repeat: "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come." There are complex meanings in the above words, but the gist of it is that death is something good for the righteous—a refuge. Christ Jesus is a Refuge, and in Him all that is disposed for His people becomes a refuge. Rather, it is to be noted that among the deliverances that come to us through Jesus, there is that of the fear of death. For a long time the Christian is afraid of death, and considers it an enemy, and it is called "enemy" in the Scripture in a certain place when it says that death is the last enemy. However, it is an inverted language; it is described as seen by man before the Lord delivers him from the fear of the terror of it. Such deliverance is not easy, and does not come quickly, but it must come for the Christian, if he is a Christian. We do not realize and we make all the promises of heaven ours at one time. They are ours, on condition that we believe them, one by one, answering with a loud "Amen," to the "Yes" of the Lord, but little by little, in the school of the Holy Spirit we go on discovering them, all included in that sacrifice that reaches all our needs. God has given—has presented—all the

things that pertain to life (eternal life) and to godliness, and to a life of holiness and of consecration.

Among the promises, there is that of being delivered from the fear of death. There is more, because after we shall have dismissed the fear, we begin to salute death as a stepping stool, a benefactor that God has placed in our pilgrimage, the last enemy according to the appearance, but which in reality is the last beneficent act of which the Lord serves Himself in order to lead us, finally, into His presence. We cannot enter definitively into *that* life, if we do not completely go out of *this* one; we cannot be clothed with the body of resurrection if we have not taken off the earthly dress. Undress in order to dress. Death is precious in the sight of the Lord because only then does He take possession of us who are His inheritance. Just as the Testament of Jesus has no value for us unless we accept the death of the Testator, so the heirs do not enter into the goods of the Testator except when they are dead to the earthly life. That death was needed; our deaths are needed.

There is more: We are surrounded by dangers which we cannot even foresee, and it is dangerous to desire a long life beyond the point in which we can spend it, by grace, for the glory of the Lord Himself. The great king Hezekiah would have finished better, if he had died when the Lord sent him a message to prepare himself; whereas in the fifteen years added on, he committed the sin of pride with regard to the ambassadors of Babylon. It was in those added years that the wicked Mannassah was born. Therefore, if we know the ways of the Lord, instead of being afraid of death, we will say that it is not an enemy, but a refuge from evil. Far be it from us to ask the Lord to shorten our days, except for only one case that we feel to say if living longer, we would perhaps lose His face. Therefore we are moved by the cry of a great mystic woman who said at death: "Oh death come

running; deliver me from this life which endangers one to lose that which alone is True Life.”

TRUTH AND CHARITY – JUSTICE AND PEACE

Some shout, “Charity and peace;” others answer, “Justice and truth are needed.” Both of them ignore the fact that charity alone engenders weakness, and truth alone leads to extreme rigor which, at times, degenerates to cruelty. Samuel exaggerated in pity toward Saul; Jonah wanted the destruction of Nineveh at any cost. The Lord corrected the one and the other.

Some say, and they are right, “God is Love;” others retort, “God is a consuming fire;” and they also are right. In reality, God is love but His spirit discovers and eliminates in us one evil after another, and keeps our humanity under control. Some cite the rigor of St. Paul toward that grave sinner—the Church of the Corinthians; others insist on the mercy of God. Effectively, the apostle used rigor but later, there having been repentance, he exhorted the Church to restore and to demonstrate charity.

If God gives a spirit of repentance—if God gives it—who will dare to qualify God as weak? And if there is no repentance, who will venture to deem himself more merciful than God Himself?

TODAY

Many times it has occurred to us to conclude great lines with two adverbs: one of place—HERE: one of time—NOW.

We are so oppressed by the visible, that only by a continuous leap of faith do we have the intuition of the continuous presence of the Lord and of His being in every place. "HERE"—"NOW" do not occur quickly, but after much suffering; and even then, we must by a resolute will repeat: "HERE—NOW."

Feasts? Sabbath? They are concluded in one day, and it is "TODAY—if you hear His voice, harden not your heart." (Psalm 95:7, 8). Today. Yesterday has passed with its errors, disappointments and our sins. We cannot relive it, except in salutary repentance and accrued experience. That which is lost is lost, except for this: That the Lord transforms it into a lesson for a better life. He, Powerful and Benignant knows how to restore from that which the locust and other vermin have devoured (Joel 2). Weep, yes, from penitence and gratitude, but from desperation, no—never; rather, a greater trust and courage in the Lord.

Tomorrow? Perhaps it will not come for us on earth; and if it comes, we don't know how and under what circumstances. Only "Today" is before us. Therefore, forgetting the past, except for that which must be remembered in contrition and gratitude, and not preoccupied about the future, giving yesterday and tomorrow back to the Eternal Lord, let us open ourselves every morning to the light and to the Grace of the Lord, because His Mercies and His Guidance are renewed every morning.

WHY SO MANY SCANDALS AMONG THOSE
BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?

We know that “an enemy” sows tares and that these must grow together with the wheat until maturity. The subject of tares is an interesting one. However, many who err are not tares. Why is it, therefore, that persons baptized with the Holy Spirit transcend to painful and, alas! shameful excesses? There are those who reproach us saying, “Those in the world are better than you.” Oh that it were even so, that all were better, and that we too would be received by the Lord.

A reflection: In the life of David—the man after God’s heart—truly painful events are recorded. He took refuge among the Philistines, placing himself at risk either to fight against his own people or to betray his benefactor. At the height of prosperity he committed that double sin recorded in 2nd Samuel 11.

Saul never went to the Philistines; and it is not recorded that he might have committed sins similar to those of David. Was Saul, therefore, a better man than David? But, let’s return to the subject.

It is the fire, and not the cold, that discovers and re-animates the hidden snakes. The viper was frozen and innocuous among the branches, but with the proximity of the fire, it awakened and acted according to its nature. However, the fire discovered it, and the fire destroyed it.

Many who seem to be correct—and outwardly they are—have poisons that remain well covered by malice and hypocrisy. The surface is good, but the inside hides abysses of iniquity. Only the Holy Spirit can excavate the

subterfuges of the old man. The greater the work of the Holy Spirit, the more frequent and strong are the shakings that force the old man to take off his mask, and to show himself such as he is. In those who are the sheep of the Lord, the shakings discover and produce penitence (deep sorrow), and enable them to have mercy toward others, producing an ever greater hunger and thirst of Christ. The more they draw near to Jesus, the more they disappear before themselves. How many? Who are they? To the Lord the arduous judgment. The Church is a "Remnant."

FATHERS AND CHILDREN

(Malachi 4:6; Luke 1:17)

The Lord has blessed the family—prophecy and image of the life in heaven. One of the boldest prayers is the one recorded in Ephesians 3:14-21; the Apostle says, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."

The mention is directed principally to the two sections of the Church—that is, to those in the beyond and to those who are still pilgrims in this world. However, mentioning the "family" is not without a purpose, because in the same epistle and elsewhere Paul insists on exhorting that the family be holy. We mean the little nucleus that is the basis of the great family. Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, in describing the condition of apostasy and the

indifference of the people and priests, concludes the message by announcing that before the Day of the Lord would come, the prophet Elijah would appear, who would “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I (saith the Lord) come and smite the earth with a curse.”

The Lord JESUS affirmed that Elijah came in the person of John the Baptist. John and Elijah are two distinct individuals; nevertheless, John came in the spirit and virtue of Elijah (Luke 1:17; Matthew 17:11, 13). The essential part of the ministry of John the Baptist, as was prophesied by the Angel to Zacharias, is summed up in these words: “And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before Him (the Lord—that is, he will precede Him) in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.” (Luke 1:16, 17).

The New Testament begins where the Old ended; John the Baptist, the last voice of the Old, is the closest one to us who announces the New. Our language is imperfect, yet it is the best we can use to blend the two messages into one: that of Malachi and that of Luke. As an illustration, it can be said that the Old Testament must yield to the New, and the Apostles are more important than the Prophets, but it is not the direct explanation of the Message of the Messages.

God wants the sanctity of the family, in whatever sense the word “family” is used. If we don’t understand the material things, how will we understand the heavenly? Rather, it is in the plan of the Lord to make of the two, one. That is, the human becomes heavenly, and the heavenly, without losing anything, comes down and becomes human (Ephesians 1:10). The history of the human family and that of the Church, if it would be minutely described, would present

pages of horror. The ruin lies in the lack of reciprocal conversion between fathers and children. Perverted fathers have treated their tender children like insensitive objects; children have despised, abandoned, or worse, their old parents.

Terrible pictures present themselves to our imagination. In the religious field, the horror is not less. Those who have had some privilege of seniority or ministry have regarded the children as if they were property; and the children, as soon as they acquired a little strength and numbers have despised the old people as if they were rusted iron.

We acknowledge that there were exceptions—that is, those who were converted, and those who are reciprocally converted one to another. However, the message remains, and it is that before the coming of the great and illustrious Day of the Lord, Elijah will appear to convert (to turn) the heart of the fathers to the children, and the latter to the fathers. In the language of St. Luke: “the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.”

But when is the time of the prophecy? Is it the past; is it the future? We respect the past, and we are waiting for the future; but the Word is applied also to the present. In the camp of the Spirit two adverbs should be kept in mind: Here—Now. Even after having the message of the Gospel, a preparation is necessary so that we may truly SEE—and will see it even now—the glorious Day of the Lord, and that is that He manifests Himself in us. The words “great and illustrious day of the Lord” extend themselves in each one of us, according to the measure of the hunger and thirst that we have for Jesus Christ, desiring that He alone should reign over us. The day in which one shall have consecrated Him as King and Lord is a great and illustrious day. Two forces

come into collision continually in every Movement: the old one of the pioneers, and the other of the young people. The first ones are not owners, but they must consider that they have begun, like others before them began, and God has another people and extension of message. They must turn to the young people with love and hope, exhorting them to faithfulness, and declaring that ONE alone reigns over everyone. They rejoice if they see that the Lord develops the children. And the latter should not be rebellious and presumptuous, as if they had no need of the former. They should not imitate the foolish counselors of the weak Rehoboam. Let them be reverent and, where they can, let them follow the prudent counsels. Nor should they be afraid of one another; if the conversion is reciprocal, each one will deem the other more worthy than himself.

Where this is not, or cannot be, the case after the Lord will have stirred up some prophetic message that tends to equilibrate—where this is not understood and realized—the interdict follows—that is destruction.

But God has a Remnant of “fathers” who consider themselves guardians, not owners, and of children who consider themselves continuers, not destroyers or exalted innovators.

Reciprocal Humility and Charity will make the way for drawing ever closer to the Lord, to purify those who wait for Him, in His Day, which begins and extends into Glory.

LOT, THE JUDGE(Genesis 19:1, 9, 14; 2nd Peter 2:8)

We could also entitle this: "The Mocked Reformer." Men who are truly faithful and who live as pilgrims, dwell like Abram outside of Sodom; but Lot, little by little, ended by establishing himself in Sodom, and like all those who live in two worlds, tried to console himself by saying to himself: "Abraham has remained isolated and does not benefit anyone. But I, dwelling in the city, in contact with many, do good to others." Lot exerted himself to reform others, and he became an important personage.

Two angels (not three) arrived in Sodom toward evening—that is, around sunset: Lot was sitting at the gate of the city. Supposing, as is reasonable, that there was more than one gate, the one near which Lot was seated was the most important entrance, since it is called "the gate," Sitting at the gate indicates a position of authority (Deut. 21:19; Ruth 4:1; Lamentations 5:14; Psalm 69:12; Proverbs 22:22; Isaiah 29:21; Amos 5:10, 12, 15; Judge at the gate, Proverbs 31:23).

We have cited the aforesaid passages to say clearly that Lot, seated at the gate, had become important. By what he had succeeded in becoming important is not said; however, it is not arbitrary to infer it from the fact that he had become related by marriage; he had taken a wife in Sodom. Remembering moreover that he, separating himself from his uncle, had coveted and selected the plain, we conclude that Lot was a clever and shrewd man in the ways of the world.

There he is at the door—the judge!

But can the Lots correct and reform others? Lot called those big sinners "brothers," but he did not win them over. They

rejected him saying “stand back,” and then they said among themselves, indirectly giving us his history and portrait: “This one fellow came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, even Lot, and came near to break the door.”

Lot had two masters: the world and the Lord; and he served neither of the two. We ask ourselves: “Therefore, must nothing be done for Sodom?” The answer is that it is necessary to do that which Abraham did—that is, to pray, provide the safety for whomever can escape, without mingling with the world.

Lot, unhappy judge! Ineffectual reformer! Not even the sons-in-law listened to him when he ran to warn them to flee: “Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city.” This is what Lot said, but his words carried no weight then, because they never had any in the past. It seemed to the sons-in-law that the old man was joking. He himself was not ready to go out: “He lingered.” He had been in Sodom too long and he had, as the world says, made a fortune. He was lingering. The angels took him by the hand and brought him forth—him, his wife, the two daughters. And yet he still had not yielded to the Lord.

“Escape to the mountain,” they said to him; but he, still full of his own will, begged: “I cannot escape to the mountain. Behold now, this city is near to flee unto...”

His request was accepted; but this resulted in greater confusion for him. His story concludes with the sad narrative of Genesis 19:30-38. From him were born the forefathers of the Moabites and of the Ammonites who were among the enemies of the people of God. Grace received him and in 2nd Peter 2:8, 9 we read that the Lord justified him and qualified him as being vexed with the “filthy conversation of the

wicked.” From this can be drawn that Lot tried to do something for the Lord: he attempted to correct the customs of those of Sodom. But the word in the mouth of the man of two worlds had no strength; it was paralyzed. The words were good, but the voice had an accent that did not carry conviction. The world is shrewd and does not listen to idle talk, but must be constrained by the voice of Heaven.

There have been and there are many “Lots” who try to reform the world, whereas they themselves are not truly yielded to the Lord. Such people are not helpers, but a great obstacle.

The authority in the word comes from the Authority of God. And He gives it to those who, like Abram, are ready to separate themselves from everything and from everyone to follow Him.

THE WORD OF HIS MOUTH

(Isaiah 55:11; John 6:63)

Far be it from us—us—to want to mortify anyone about the past. It is the future to which we must pay attention

In the past—who more, who less—we have talked on our own and without guidance, not moved each time by the Holy Spirit. We wanted to force a scriptural passage, saying to ourselves: “It is, after all, the word of God (that was inspired

by God).” Or else, blessed by a message given or heard in the past, we have repeated it or heard it, but without effect; or else, our having been illuminated in something, we have wanted, without guidance, to pass it on to others. And some of us have had discouraging experiences. BUT NOW! Now there rings sweetly but solemnly to us, the voice and word in Isaiah 55:11 and John 6:63. The word of God CREATES. He brings about everything by the power of His Word. Even the most reasonable and exact affirmations are ineffective, if not pronounced by the mouth of the Lord.

We have, who knows, condemned others because they have not listened to us and we have not considered that the creature does not submit to other creatures, but only to the Creator. And it is the Lord who uses whom, when, and how He wants by means of His Word—as much as, and with the accent that He wants (John 12:49, 50; 17:8).

It’s only then that there will be the effect—the fruit that God wants—when it is His mouth that has spoken. That is, only the Holy Spirit can speak and give the Word of God.

NO LIMIT TO SALT

(Ezra 7:22; Mark 9:49; James 1:15)

Among the sad observations that I recall from my past, there is that of the beggars who, barely able to obtain a piece of bread for themselves, needed salt. In some countries, salt is sold by the government and costs relatively a lot. “A little bit of salt,” the poor people say! Recent is the memory of the

march in India, on the shores of the ocean, which is well named: "March of the salt."

Ezra, with permission to go to Jerusalem, received many benefits and in ample measure. In enumerating them, he concludes: "As for salt, it was not prescribed."

No measure for salt. He who follows through the Scripture the various passages in which salt is mentioned, understands the importance that it has as a type of something quite different. Let the salt not be lacking! "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." (Mark 9:49). But it is necessary to take care that the salt does not become tainted, because when it is tainted it becomes worse than any arid land. There is an ancient proverb which, translated, says: "When the best is tainted, it becomes the worst!" The two extremes!

Saints and wise people are in the churches, and also those who are wicked, senseless and foolish. We say "in the churches" (plural), because we know that in them there is *the* Church.

Salt must not be lacking. Jesus exhorted: "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another." Only by having salt IN OURSELVES, can we live in peace with others. It is to be noted that salt, in order to season, must be liquefied—no longer be seen. We must not go around showing off salt, but know how to hide ourselves, yet to serve and to benefit others. It is not necessary to add that it is a figure of wisdom, and we like to add, of wisdom with a measure of understanding. Wisdom and measure go together (Isaiah 11:2).

There is a source or mine of salt, as vast as the highest mountains and the ocean. Therefore, there is no excuse to remain without salt—wisdom. St. James exhorts: "If any of you lack wisdom..." "If..." We observe: And who is there

that is not lacking? Therefore: "If any of you (the 'you' who are trusting in the Lord) lack wisdom, let him ask of God." Learn to ask well, in that Name—it is not necessary to write in what Name; ask OF GOD, not of others; and God "gives."

Many poor people do not have the wherewithal to acquire a little bit of material salt, but no one has to pay for the superior salt. It has already been paid for, and there is an infinite quantity. Ask in faith; salt (wisdom) shall be given by grace, freely, without the danger that the Giver might marvel at the request for guidance and wisdom, even in small things and that might appear to be free from difficulty. The Great and Wise One condescends to one who is poor and ignorant. He gives to him, and does not rouse shame in him.

WISDOM! We begin to have it, always continuing to ask according to the need, when we begin to fear God. But we become wise when, like Job, we shall have paid strict attention to the message of Elihu, in the message of Him of whom Elihu was a prophecy and a figure, and when the thunders of God shall have shaken and deepened us, and we shall, like Job, have come to the condition of no longer seeing ourselves, but we shall declare that we are nothing, without even saying it—(oh! the pride in false humility! Enough of making a display even of our miseries and shortcomings! In good, in evil, let us make a funeral to ourselves).

Then you and I, like Job, shall have learned wisdom—that is, having understood that there isn't any in us, and wise in knowing that we are not wise, we shall ask, step by step, and will receive salt, wisdom, without measure—that is, as much as is necessary. Amen.

WHAT IS THAT TO THEE – FOLLOW THOU ME

(John 21:22)

Peter has just heard the commission to feed the lambs and sheep, when immediately he is warned of a work of preparation that the Lord will do for him: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”

It seems that we have two—rather three—men before us. The younger Peter—the one of the time in which Jesus was speaking to him—and the future Peter.

Younger: “When thou wast young (younger) thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest.” The girding of himself by his own strength and will. Thou, thou...thyself... That time was in the past. It was necessary to look to the future: “But when thou shalt be old (that is, mature in the ways of the Lord) thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee.” Your hands will not be active by your energy, but you will stretch them out peacefully and yielded. “Another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest not.” Now, in the material sense, the prophecy is applied to the death that St. Peter would suffer. The Scripture itself tells us this; but it likewise expresses the thought that the man who is yielded to God stretches out his hands to indicate, not resistance, but passivity, because another will gird him and bring him to be crucified. Spirit and flesh battle until the end. He who wants to do the will of God, to walk by the Spirit, must continually stretch out his hands and allow himself to be imprisoned by the will of God, in order to be

led where, according to man, he would not want. This is the plan that the Lord had for Peter and has for everyone.

Between the two, there is an interval. No longer young to move about at a whim, and not even yet mature enough to want to stretch out his hands, yielded, in order to be girded and led. And the time in which Peter heard these words was the interval in which Peter found himself. Even this intermediate time is an important time and rich with difficulties and experiences.

The errors of the past, although left behind, have not yet impressed upon us all of the important lesson; the plan of the future, although heard, also has not yet penetrated us with holy desire and decision.

“And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, follow me.” The man no longer young and not yet old, followed—but not with his eye fixed on the footsteps of the One who was before him. Another also was following, and Peter had not heard that Jesus had called the latter to follow Him.

“Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on His breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth Thee?” This double allusion is not put here by chance. Peter should have remembered the intimate posture of John, the evening of the Holy Supper, and how he himself had signaled that he should ask the name of the traitor. This should have been enough to keep him sober and, although not audibly called, the one who had enjoyed such intimacy with Jesus should be allowed to follow. But, in certain moments of blessings, especially if one is still in the interval between youth, confident of itself and maturity, designated but not reached, one is apt to forget many things in favor of others. Perhaps Peter was very little occupied with that prophecy of crucifixion, and very much occupied with the “feeds” and with “follow me,” and he felt

as if someone were invading his camp which he thought was reserved for him alone: "Lord, and what shall this man do?" He does not even call him by his name, but "this man!"

But the prompt warning of Jesus recalled him to sobriety. "Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?" He said two things to him: One, that the Lord was able to give him something more than to Peter himself: "Tarry till I come." This was a greater privilege than that granted to other apostles; and He told him that it wasn't important for Peter to know how the Lord wanted to work with John. For the one who was coming in second and without having heard any voice calling him, there was a plan concerning which Peter had no right to occupy himself. What is that to thee? You do that which I have told you and pay no attention to that which is for others.

This warning is one of those that should be repeated more in order to make us lose our importance in our own eyes, and to know that the Lord, HE, walks in the midst of the seven candlesticks and that nothing escapes His eyes. There are those of whom we do not have high-sounding testimonies, for whom it can seem that the Lord does not do much, because He doesn't act with them as with others, but whom He can call to higher privileges: "If I will that he tarry till I come?"

Peter learned the lesson. In his old age, he appears to us full of holy humility and consideration for others. He honors the apostle Paul, to whom the Lord has given a special wisdom. Writing to the elders, he could have given himself an apostolic importance because he was an apostle. He nevertheless uses a modest language. He appeals that they accept the exhortation, when constrained to insist on something. The last chapter of the first epistle has these humble words: "The elders which are among you I exhort,

who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.”

The hands of this saint are stretched forth, not quick to gird himself, but disarmed and beneficent, in prayer for all and ready to be bound, in order that his head might be put downward, like the Lord had prophesied.

ENEMY OF THINE ENEMIES

ADVERSARY OF THINE ADVERSARIES

(Exodus 23; Psalm 81:13, 14)

“I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries.” This is the promise in Exodus 23:20-23: “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my Name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.” Take notice: “Behold,” pay attention to “Behold,” because it is the way the Holy Spirit brings us to attention. “I...” it is the Lord

who speaks—"send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way (watch over you), and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared (lead you)." The Lord has a plan in our life: He watches over us and leads us. There is our part: "Beware of Him"—that is, keep yourself always before Him, "obey His voice." Voice is more than word; provoke Him not."

"My Name is in Him." Name, in the old books is a prophecy of Jesus Christ. Who this Angel is, is not written but whether he be a servant messenger or the Son of God Himself, the important thing is the Name was in Him. After the announcement of the Guide and the exhortation to live in awe before Him, follows the promise: "But if thou shalt indeed obey His Voice..." Note "Voice", "...and do all that I speak..." It is the Angel who speaks, and it is God Himself who speaks, whatever mouth may be used. "I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries."

For a long time the pilgrim is preoccupied with obstacles, adversaries and enemies, but if he keeps himself to the message given him by the Presence and the Word of the Guide, he will not have to fear anything. Identified with the Lord, he will have in his own name neither friends nor enemies. Therefore, let him be careful to be continually controlled from Above; the Lord will provide for the difficulties and the enemies.

This is repeated in Psalm 81:13, 14 in other words: "Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways! I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries." Oh that we might meditate and believe, thus being liberated from fear and fright, having only one fear: that of God.

PUTTING FORTH THE HAND TO THE ARK OF GOD(2nd Samuel 6:6, 7)

A tragic notice in a few words: "And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God."

"And David was displeased, because the Lord had made a breach upon Uzzah: and he called the name of the place Perez-Uzza; that is, Breach of Uzzah. Nothing else is written, but there is a picture in the little that is written.

David and a great number of people were intent on transporting the ark. "They set the ark of God upon a new cart. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab drave the new cart." The cart was new, as was the mode of transportation, since according to law, the ark had to be carried on the shoulders of the Levites. Among so many people, being selected as a driver of the cart was a privilege. Two young men were selected, and they were sons of the one in whose house the ark had been until that day. See them seated on high, while the people and the king, feasting, were proceeding on foot.

But in that new scene, a new occurrence also took place. The oxen, almost as if to do it on purpose, shook the ark—that is, they made a movement by which the ark was moved from where they had situated it on the cart. Moved, but not thrown down.

And Uzzah—it was certainly he who was guiding the cart, since we consider his brother simply a companion—and

Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God. Since the words "his hand" are not in the text, the sculptural language is: "Uzzah put forth." Uzzah extended, stretched himself. For this, the Lord made him die. What reason was there? Apparently none; much in reality, since the comment of the Holy Spirit is "for his error."

The two expressions "Put Forth" and "Error" are the key to the rapid punishment. It was not the actual act, innocent in itself, but the heart of the man which gave the thrust to the actual act. Uzzah was certainly necessary. It was he who was most visible in the crowd; it was he on the new cart, and he extended himself externally, while inwardly he was extending himself, feeling important.

We close here, and say to ourselves and to others: Hands in place; we ourselves in place, and we move only when and how God wants.

VOICE – WORD – LIGHT

(Job 37:4; John 8:12; Revelation 10:3, 4)

The Christian must absolutely accept the methods of Heaven; he must not discuss them, nor pretend to arrive at the truth by human power, but only by revelation; if he disposes himself to hear the voice first and the word after, in the end he will receive light. The Creator, with the creation and the creature; the Lord, with the disciples, begins with the

voice and follows with words; He commands, then He gives light. "God said;" the light came following the "said." In Job 37, Elihu mentions flashes of lightning, but in verse 4 the order is inverted, because the true translation of the verse is: "He will not stay them (the flashes of lightning), when His voice (begun by the thunder) is heard," Thunder first, flashes of lightning afterward.

Jesus began with an appeal to hear, that His voice may be heard: His sheep hear, listen to the voice and follow, being guided step by step. Voice and Word. He is the Word (expression) of God: they present the Person; they reveal the personality, the character. One who follows Him—and if he hears, he will follow Him—listens and receives light because Jesus is light and those who follow Him do not remain in darkness, but will have the light of life. That is, progressive light, which tends to give knowledge in that which leads to Life (eternal life) and to Holiness. Voice, word and light lead to that which is true knowledge, and to that in which Life Eternal consists. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God. And Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3).

Let us read Revelation 10:3, 4: "And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth; and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." Thunders, voice, not preceded by lightning; the voice followed by thunders, terminated in clear and precise commands to the man of heaven, to the great and devout contemplative.

ENSNARING IN WORDS

(Isaiah 29:19-22)

“The meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel. For the terrible one is brought to nought, and the scorner is consumed, and all that watch for iniquity are cut off (caress their iniquity instead of guarding against it, and spy on others).”

“That make a man an offender for a word, and lay a snare for him that reproveth in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of nought.” Another version says: “They consider a man an offender for a word.”

The enemies of Jesus, time after time, tried to draw words out of His mouth by which they might accuse Him. They did not succeed. But we are apt to fail, not in one but in many words; and they are evaluated according to the spiritual condition of the one who hears them. Where iniquity is caressed, every word that offers the opportunity to accuse is promptly picked up and kept in reserve so that it may be used as a weapon against the one who has said it. Many times it is the wicked person who draws it out of one's mouth in order to accuse.

But where there is the charity of Christ, one does not judge according to the hearing of the ears. Not one, nor at times, many words can give the right to call someone an offender, but the whole of one's conduct, which is a revealer of the inner life. Charity does not devise evil.

THE HAND AT THE THRONE

(Exodus 17:8-16)

Amalek, type of the flesh, lay in wait for the people of God. They came to Rephidim in order to fight against the Israelites. "And Moses said unto Joshua, choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek." Nor was he contented with sending the warriors to fight; but he himself (Moses) with Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill. "And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek..."

No one, alone, could boast of the victory. Not the three men on the mountain, because the battle was fought by Joshua in the plain; not Joshua, because when the hand of Moses was tired and was lowered, Joshua was losing; not Moses, because he did not have the strength to hold his hands up, at length, and much less Aaron and Hur, because they were simply helpers. And yet all four were needed, of one accord, as if they were one man alone. And one should not forget that the prayer with the hands held up was made by a man who was seated, who was resting on a stone. The latter is a figure of that Stone that will never fail—that is, Christ. "The four," in Him, are victorious: a symbol of the Church, in which the individual alone can do very little, but is used in the whole, in the Body.

That conflict was a symbol of a long conflict, to which the Lord calls our attention, so that we will not fall asleep and so

that we depend on Him alone, for the final victory. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven."

He—not us. Only the Spirit of the Lord can keep down and finally overthrow Amalek. The best that we can do is to consign the battle to Him.

"Moses built an Altar (symbol of Christ), and named it: The Lord is my banner; and he said, The Lord has sworn; the Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to generation." (New American Standard Bible, Exodus 17:15,16). (The Italian (Diodati) Bible reads "...and he said: Surely there is a hand at the throne of the Lord."). "The hand at the Throne. Jesus is on High to help us." "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16).

"He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Hebrews 7:25).

THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED

(Proverbs 25:26)

There is only one who is Righteous—and yet there are those who are righteous. That is, those who are justified by faith in Jesus, and strive to obey Him. The text in Proverbs 25:26 concerns itself with these righteous ones. The wicked is not the average sinner, but a special sinner—who likes to appear

holy, and like the ancient Pharisee, he washes the outside of the cup, whereas inwardly he caresses iniquity and malice. Psalm 50:16, 17 gives an appropriate definition of it: "But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth? Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee." Now to the text: "A righteous man falling down before the wicked is as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring." "falling down..." Other versions—and they are also correct because the word is rich in meaning—read: "gives way"—prostrates himself—before the wicked—or walks uncertainly—similar to the steps of an infant who is not yet sure of his movements. Sad scene—and yet, alas! So, so common, only that this is not seen because our heart must be freed from vanity, and from the desire for human approval, and therefore, the eyes must be purified by holy eye-salve. The scene is sad and moreover, it produces damage to the righteous one himself, because he—the righteous one—does not remain pure before God, and if he continues, he can fall down entirely; he is "as a troubled fountain, and a corrupt spring."

Woe to me if I qualify myself "righteous" and others "wicked." But it is undeniable that there are those who are "righteous" and those who are "wicked." It is a painful truth that there is much ecclesiastic politics, a desire to rule over the souls. There is, until the end, the spirit of the Scribe and of the Pharisee—raw literalism and rigor over others while excusing ourselves, and the hypocrisy that likes to put on a show, without reality. Therefore you, I, oh reader, let us prostrate ourselves more and more before the Lord so that He may justify us and bring us into all righteousness, and that He may give us discernment to discover the wicked and all wickedness. We must not caress, at least not by using false, flattering speech or gentleness, because the wicked children of the mother are able ecclesiastics and are very

influential. Discernment of spirit and holy decision to please God are rare, but essential. Lord, Help us!

BLESSING AND CURSING

(James 3:9-12)

“Therewith (the tongue) bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing... doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? Either a vine, figs? So can no fountain yield salt water and fresh.”

We have before us a man, full of religious ostentation, who deceives himself, and succeeds in deceiving many. He is always ready to bless God, and to call Him Father; and immediately, with the same tongue, he speaks evil of men who are made in the image of God. He thinks he is blessing the Creator and instead, he is cursing Him.

When did he curse Him? When he has spoken evil of the least of the creatures of God, he has cursed God. He has never blessed. But has he not at least mixed a little blessing and cursing? Is it not exaggeration to say that he has always cursed? Let us see! The first two transcribed verses say that he has blessed a little and cursed a little. The other Scripture

says that he has not been able to mix the two things; therefore it is clear he has always cursed.

The mouth, the tongue—that is, the visible organs—have blessed God and cursed men. It has been appearance, but not reality. Instead, the fountain that is invisible, cannot send forth sweet and bitter. Likewise the tree cannot bear other fruit than that to which it is destined. Consequently, that man has blessed God outwardly, but since the fountain is bitter, he has never blessed with his heart, only cursing has come out of him. This is so much more iniquitous and worthy of condemnation, inasmuch as he has covered it with the Name of God and of Father, offending God and the Father many times, directly by lying to Him, and indirectly by mistreating the creatures whom He loves. When he has cursed, he has spoken of his own; when he has blessed, he has simulated and lied.

Consequently, pay attention to the fountain. It is necessary that the life of Jesus Christ works us inwardly, and only then will we bless God and not curse anyone; rather, we will love all of God's creatures.

BY NAME

(John 10:3)

Someone has said that there is no worse inequality than treating unequal creatures equally. This is an affirmation, which seems to be unjust but is not unjust, if understood with discretion. The wise doctor does not treat all sick ones in the

same manner. Rather, each one according to his illness and toleration of the remedy. The Good Shepherd has a general and a particular relationship with the sheep. He takes care of all sheep as if they were only one, and of one as if it were the entire flock; but He has a special relationship with each one known to Him alone. Each sheep has his name—that is, his special character and quality. He studies all of them and each one of them, and calls each according to his name.

No two Christians are alike. Although we all have the heavenly vocation, we differ from one another in character, education, society and culture. Some have been poor always; some sickly and easily agitated. Others are more patient and are calmer by natural disposition. The errors of some are more explainable than those of others; those who have been despised always and poor always, are prompt to suspect and become offended easily. Others are more tempted to want to distance themselves because, having a generous nature, they do not see themselves as being esteemed and understood.

And Jesus who knows us all, uses infinite Wisdom and Charity. Rather than becoming irritated and suspicious of each other, let us learn to love each other.

DEAD FAITH

(James 2:20)

There is no disharmony between St. James and St. Paul, because both of them say the same thing regarding faith. Re-reading Ephesians 2:10, it is clear that faith must be

operative; meditating on St. James, it can be clearly seen that the works accomplished in God—that is, by Him and for His glory—demonstrate faith. Quibble who may, we insist upon the harmony among Grace, Faith and Works. Grace represents the good—the good of God that becomes ours if we extend the hand of Faith to take; Grace and Faith lead to working, because the Lord has predestined us to work according to the counsel of His will and wisdom.

To those who feed on beautiful phrases and live without putting them into practice, St. James thunders: "Faith without works is dead." And, in order that someone may not be deluded to believe that what is dead is simply the loss of one thing and not of another, we will comment on the word "death." That which is dead not only has no life, but when tied to that which is alive, it will corrupt and destroy it. The dry branch ages the tree; a tumor, if it is not extracted, poisons the blood. The law of ancient Rome had a severe ordinance against certain dangerous criminals. The cadaver of a dead man would be tied to the live person in a way that he could not free himself of it, and this was under strict surveillance. No other punishment. Condemned to move about always with that body on his back, little by little he rotted and was killed.

What therefore, is our theme? If we wish to be sincere and practical, it is this: Those who boast of having faith, who say "glory, glory," but do not practice, are in worse condition than those who know nothing, and have not confessed anything, because they—the vainglorious religionists—saddle themselves with a dead man by whom they are slowly destroyed in a terrible and shameful way. One should not trifle with the blessings of the Lord, with the great heights! The message of the old man Simeon always comes to mind: "And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many

in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34, 35). Grant us, oh Lord to hear Thee alone, and hearing Thee, to have the faith of which Thou art the Beginning and the Finisher.

ROSE - LILY

(Song of Solomon 2:1, 2, 16; Matthew 6:28, 29)

During a funeral, I had the first light on the relationship between the Lilies and the Resurrection. Observing the halo of light and of peace that had diffused itself on the countenance of the deceased, I was reflecting that shortly that body would be interred, when a light came to me on Matthew 6:28-30. Let us read: "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." I saw—I had never noticed before—the relationship that exists between the lily and the resurrection. The Lord says that the best apparel that Solomon could have procured for himself was not to be compared to the lily of the field; but God dresses His own better than the lilies. "Shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" The reference was to other clothing, because on the earth not even Solomon could have dressed in a way to be compared to a lily. I no longer thought of it, but in re-reading the Song

of Solomon, the words of chapter two, verses 1 and 2 struck me. They are: "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters." It is the Shulamite who speaks and qualifies herself as "Rose of Sharon, and Lily of the valleys." The same person is at first a Rose, and then becomes a Lily. The rose is in the plain—the lily is in the valley, the places symbolizing two experiences. The rose is in the plain, easily seen; in the valley is the hidden lily. When it is a "Rose," it has thorns on its stem, but in the valley it has no thorns, but is surrounded by them. In the life of many, there are flowers and thorns, be they even small. In the valley it becomes a Lily, having no more thorns in itself. The thorns are around it; and it is painful to establish that they are her very companions. "So—lily—my love among the daughters."

Since it is the same person qualified under two aspects, it is clear that there is a presence by which a Rose—and it already was a conquest—has become a Lily. By means of humiliations and sufferings she has learned to hide herself to such an extent that in the same chapter two in verse fourteen we read: "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." She is no longer the one of before when she showed her beauty in the plain, but now is in humiliation and as if discouraged, imagining that neither her voice nor her aspect deserves to appear. She has lost all personal importance, and she shows herself only as much as the friend wants. She is a dead person who is resurrected, whose life is bound to that of the Bridegroom; she seeks only His glory.

Continuing on the same subject "Lily," we note that the title of two Psalms mentions the Lilies. In fact the word in the heading, "Shoshannim," in Psalms 45 and 69, means "Super-Lily." Both of the Psalms speak of the Bridegroom—of the

Friend. In Psalm 45, it is the Bridegroom seen in glory; in Psalm 69 he is in humiliation that is followed by victory. We do not know when the two Psalms were written, but it is not an exaggeration to think that Psalm 45, although placed first in the letter, was written afterward, and Psalm 69 first, so that humiliation preceded the victory and glory. But be that as it may, with regard to the time in which they were written, it is not the first case in which the Scripture announces the end—the glory—before describing the process that leads to the glory. The scope of this writing is to meditate on the Lily—on the Lilies.

The elect pass through the transformation from Rose (with relative thorns) to Lilies, without thorns, but surrounded by thorns and, alas, where one would least believe it.

Returning to Song of Solomon, after the Fair One has declared that she is the Rose of the plain and the Lily of the valleys, she affirms that it is among the lilies that the Beloved, the Bridegroom, takes his pleasure. He loves, of course, even when the Fair One is a Rose, but in order to be satisfied he wants to feed among the Lilies. The word is rich in meaning, as to say that when He Himself is Chief Shepherd, He enjoys perfect communion. The Fair One informs: "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies." Only now that she is a Lily surrounded by thorns and lives a hidden life, only now she has the strength to declare that there is absolute intimacy; because He, the Beloved, feeds among the Lilies.

It is the prophetic portrait of the Son of Man who before going to the Cross, was seen crucified in the spirit... by a devout soul who was first seated at His feet, then pouring the perfume in anticipation of the burial.

BLESSED IGNORANCE

(John 13:7; Mathew 24:26; Acts 1:7; Mark 13:32)

“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.” (Mark 13:32).

Wonder of wonders: “Neither the Son, but only the Father.” And Jesus repeated this a short time before ascending into Heaven, when all power already had been given to Him in Heaven and on earth. Let us read in acts 1:7: “And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power.” Also Matthew 28:18: “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

Since it is something that no one knows except the Father, it is clear that there is a blessed ignorance—rather, it is commanded—a limit to the mind that says: Go no further.

Let us remember what Jesus said to Peter when He girded Himself to wash Peter’s feet, and He heard the protest: “Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?” Jesus replied: “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.”

Peter—and far be it from us to censure him—protested and Jesus replied: “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” (v. 8). Interpreting the “never” of the disciple, we hear that which he thought: “But what knowing—and knowing hereafter! I know now that which you want to do: Wash my feet. I know. There is no need to say anything else. Never.” The disciple was ignorant of the lesson hidden in the great

humiliation of the Master. The time came that he was enlightened, but earlier he was exhorted to be content in not knowing. There are things that we are ignorant of today and we will know later on, and others for which we will have to wait for the beyond. For example, the word of the same disciple in John 6:69 reveals two times: one, of having followed Jesus in faith, and the other, of having known Him. In the first time, the faith was like a basis of future knowledge. In the realm of the Spirit, it is necessary to distinguish between potential knowledge (promise, to be accepted in faith), and real, practical knowledge. We have believed that Jesus gives peace; now, some of us know that we have peace. Let us read John 6:69 again: "And we have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God." (New American Standard Bible).

We have said, and we repeat, the human mind needs a fixed limit. It is dangerous to investigate too much, and it has been, and is, the ruin of many who do so. Let's understand: There is a seeking and an investigating that must never stop: admiring the beauty of the Lord, knowing Him of an excellent knowledge in the Father who sent Him, and in Him Who is come—how He was sent and how He came. For such, it is never "enough." But there is a limit to that which we must accept in faith, for light in the beyond. Let us distinguish!

If the limits of the periodical would not forbid us, we could say much on the great ruins and on the sects that have arisen by not being content with a blessed and recommended ignorance. We know that the modern Scribe—heir of the ancient Scribe, the first unyielding persecutor of Jesus Christ—we know that the modern Scribe immediately has one or more verses to oppose Him. We know that the Holy Spirit recommends that in certain things we must not be ignorant, this among other things, not to be ignorant of the

devices of Satan, because the great rebel tries to deceive the souls exactly through the mind. Oh, to ask for and to receive the mind of Jesus Christ!

So, there is an ignorance that we can call holy. And it is just those who have experienced the fallaciousness of the human mind and know something about so-called science—it is just these who, distrustful of their mind and of their knowing, entrust themselves, like children, to the guidance of the great Shepherd. Blessed ignorance!

Jesus did not satisfy questions such as this: “Are there many who are saved?” But He answered energetically and briefly: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate.” Nor did He satisfy the honest question of the most faithful servant up to that time, of John the Baptist, when He concluded the indirect message by saying blessed is he who is not scandalized in Jesus. Blessed ignorance that leads to greater beatitudes.

But we permit ourselves a question. Must this ignorance always depend upon our not knowing or is it possible to know? The parable of the potter will help us. The potter did not rely upon his first work, nor did he mend the vessel. He waited until the clay fell to the ground for a new beginning, from which there would result a vessel to His liking.

Likewise God. But there is a difference; clay is insensitive, whereas we are sensitive. Our sacrifice exudes blood. It is not easy to “not want” in order to want absolutely. That is, to say “NO to ourselves for a great and continuous “YES” to God!

Jesus never wanted anything except that which the Father wanted. He never said anything except that which, by means of Him, the Father said, and as He wanted to say it. But Jesus, perfect Man, suffered and was tempted in all things without sinning. This supposes a conflict from which He

emerged as victor, because He depended upon the Grace of God. He lived in the Grace of the Father.

He said that He could do nothing. He wanted to not want to do anything. The “not being able” was an effect of a decisive wanting to keep Himself without strength in Himself. How little, oh Lord, do we know Thee! What then of the ignorance?

Whatever may be the understanding of “not even the Son knew” (Mark 13), and “only the Father knows” (Acts 1), this is certain: Jesus represents all the children of God; and therefore the children of God, firm in the absolute truth that God is Father, and the Father is God—that is, that infinite Love is tied to infinite Wisdom and Power—they must be content not to know what the beyond, the Realm of Light, will want to reveal. And meanwhile, although often in obscurity and in the desert, to lean—in faith—on the Lord, and to trust in Him. Blessed are those who wait for Him even in the way of His judgments.

Faith and love go together. One who believes, loves—and one who loves, believes.

DEATH BEFORE LIFE(1st Corinthians 15:36)

“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.” To sow means to see a continual death in order to wait for a continual resurrection. If the farmer does not want to part with the seed that he throws into the ground because he knows that it must be transformed, he will never have a harvest. Every seed that he throws with hope must not only disappear from his eyes, but must die. So it is in our spiritual life, in our service to the Lord. We want to consider the lesson not only from the point of view of the resurrection of the body, but of every thing which is to the service of the blessed Name of Jesus Christ.

Whatever thing we do for Him in word, in deed, must pass through the process of death before rising again. Dying before ourselves; disappearing, or being vituperated by those whom we wish to serve, by which the very service becomes like something lost, thrown underground. However, only by losing does one gain. Only by dying does one arrive to life; by disappearing, one does good to others. Blessed are they who sow continually for the Lord, and do so under all conditions even in times of heavy anxieties, and at all times, even when it does not seem to be the season to sow. They will be able to persevere who will not want to spy on the seed that was thrown, but will have abandoned it to the providence of God, content to see it no longer, but confident that some day there will be abundant fruit for the glory of Jesus Christ.

THE GREATER PUNISHMENT OR THE PLAGUES
UPON THE HEART

(Exodus 9:14)

The greater punishment could not have been for Pharaoh; but for many among his poor and comfortless subjects who are at the disposition of the rich. The army perished in the Red Sea, but Pharaoh was quite safe and did not perish; this is clear from the whole of the narrative: Read chapter 14 of Exodus, especially verses 23 and 28 and chapter 15, verse 19, and it will be seen clearly that Pharaoh did not perish in the sea. Then the one who was most culpable received the least punishment? So it seems; but it is not so.

Aside from that which he must have suffered mutually with his people, aside from the fact that even he had lost his firstborn, Pharaoh was threatened by something special: After six plagues, the Lord sent to tell Pharaoh, "Let my people go, that they may serve me. For I will at this time send all my plagues upon thine heart, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people; that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth."

"All my plagues upon thine heart." Upon the servants, and upon the people; but upon the heart of Pharaoh. Who will be able to measure the extension of the brief words: "plagues upon the heart?" Who knows how many scourges and terrors there may have been from then on, and who knows for how long a time, set loose upon Pharaoh's heart, so as to make him desire that it would have been better if he had perished in any of the scourges rather than to remain alive to gather all into his heart? Not even the death of a son, and the loss of an army would have been an entirely inconsolable evil, because others had lost their sons; and other tyrants had lost armies and more armies. That which mattered most, for earthly purposes, was that the throne of Egypt should not be

taken from Pharaoh. Pharaoh had plagues upon his heart, while for others they fell upon the head. Those plagues, before the invisible powers, made him the greatest sufferer, the most punished among those struck by the variety of punishments.

Someone has said: "It is better to suffer the most atrocious pain than to carry the least remorse." But what is only one remorse, or even several, in view of the new affirmation, unique in all of the Bible, and in all the writings of the world, that God was sending all of His plagues upon the heart of one man? The marvel is that the heart of Pharaoh did not break; because it had been hardened, after he had hardened it—hardened no longer to understand good and evil, and hardened in order to survive the accumulation of indescribable anxieties that are the plagues upon the heart. What are the material punishments in view of the scourging of the soul, if not an alleviation? Because it is prophesied of a time that men will desire death, and death will flee from them. For a partial illustration of this, consider what happened to David. He had sinned, and the innocent child agonized for seven days, while David remained in the dust, fasting, in the adjacent room to make request to God for his healing. Who is able to measure the spasms of that father, to whom the gasping, heavy breathing of the moribund child seemed to cry out his two-fold sin. And later, on account of another sin of the king, the people were punished with a pestilence, and we do not know if someone of the family of David may have perished. The torment of that soul is delineated in these words of the king to the Angel who was smiting the people: "Lo, I have sinned, and I have done wickedly; but these sheep, what have they done? Let thine hand, I pray thee, be against me, and against my father's house." And yet David had not lost the comfort of the presence of God in the midst of the punishment... Instead

Pharaoh of the hardened heart, had all the plagues. What must Pharaoh have suffered?

The punishment, therefore, remains a mystery: not always do they suffer more who seem to us to suffer more than others. It depends upon how severe the hand of God is upon the heart or on the head. And precisely because material things are a pale image of the true punishment, who will be able to measure the punishment that fell on the Son of Man for our peace, and was concentrated in that cry under the darkened heaven: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" What must have been His suffering that not only was He burdened with our sins, but was Himself made sin for us.

BELIEVING AND OBEYING

(Exodus 4:1; John 3:33)

"And Moses answered and said, But, behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, The Lord hath not appeared unto thee."

"Believing" leads to paying attention, and this brings to obeying. But how will anyone pay attention and obey if he has not first believed? Believing is a word of vast significance. There is a danger that because we have often repeated it without reflecting upon it, we have not grasped its deep sense. In John 6:35 Jesus says: "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never

thirst." He who comes to Jesus will believe Him always more; and he who believes in Him never stops coming to Him, and will go on drawing closer to Him, up to desiring to be one with Him. Moses wanted to say, "They will not believe that you have sent me; and for that reason they will not obey." And it is understood that Moses also wanted to say, "They will not pay attention to my words."

In order not to prolong the vast subject, we will note immediately that believing in God presupposes accepting two truths: He is God—that is, Strong—and can do all. He loves us, and therefore will not deny us anything that ministers to our good. Believing in Him, in the measure that it extends, creates love and trust in us. One who believes, loves, and one who loves, believes. Loving, we learn to distinguish His Voice and are disposed to obey. One who does not want to believe, will want neither to hear nor to obey. The proud monarch of Egypt, not wanting to dispose himself to know who He might be in whose Name Moses and Aaron were speaking, answered thus, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go." It is true that Pharaoh did not know, but if he had wanted to wait for the natural light that is in every man, he could at least have disposed himself to be more enlightened. It is not ignorance that keeps men far from Heaven, but it is pride. One who disposes himself to receive light, receives it. If it were not so, no one would believe, because the things of Heaven cannot be demonstrated by the material senses, although to those who are so disposed, God gives light, even by means of visible things.

The believing that extends itself, from day to day, in honest hearts, leads to gathering the words of the Lord with love and reverence, distinguishing His Voice, and understanding little by little, even that which He does not command but that

is pleasing to Him. And therefore, continuing to believe and to hear, we will extend ourselves to diligent faithfulness in order to obey. It is not a burden—rather, it is pleasing to obey the One who loves us, knowing that He does not command except that which tends to the eternal good of our soul. Oh Lord, may we, having come to Thee, at first timidly and as if in the shadow, believe always more that you are the Omnipotent and that you are Father. Only thus, leaning solely on Thy grace, we will distinguish the voice of Thy words and will obey Thee with gladness. Amen.

BLOOD SPEAKS

(Hebrews 12:24)

“And He said, What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground.” Wretched person! Cain tried to hide himself even from the habitual places, and invited his unaware brother out to the fields, far from the familiar scenes. But he did not foresee that the blood of the innocent one would accuse him. Abel was dead but his blood was crying out more than speaking: It had a voice. It is not said what words it might have been saying; perhaps it did not say any. There was a painful cry in which so many needs are described. And this is expressed in the affirmation that God listens to the “voice of the cry.” Alas, how many Cains there are even in the churches; and alas, how many times we ourselves have been Cains, luring others out to the fields and killing them with the tongue, or with the

mind, or with the pen. We have imagined that no one would discover it, but the blood cries out, and has a voice that reaches the Throne of God. How many cries—what volume of voices whose call is one thing only: “Justice, Lord; until when?” The heavens seem to be indifferent. And in the meantime God, in His plan of Redemption, has already answered the voice of that cry. Satan, for an evil purpose, wrongly applying his insinuation, affirming nevertheless a great truth: “Skin for skin.” We say, “Blood for blood.”

To the cry of the innocent Abel, answered the Blood of ONE who was truly the only Innocent One. Not one Cain only, but all the Cains rising as only one—they have led Him outside the camp; they have risen against Him and have sacrificed Him. And He, passing through the Heavens as if penetrating a curtain—that of His own body—has ascended to the Throne, and His Blood has spoken and speaks; it pronounced, it pronounces: “Father, forgive. They are ignorant. They know not what they do.” The Blood continues to speak until such time that even the members of the Church stop imitating Cain. It is necessary to drink the Blood of the Son of Man. The Blood of the Innocent One, offered in expiation, adjusts, repairs the past, and guarantees the future, because its transfusion is the only antidote for the bad moods of the old Adam. Blood for blood; Life for life. No longer Cain who kills and not even Abel who groans and cries out, but Jesus Christ, our Justice, Hope of glory. (“Receiving the Kingdom”).

SEPARATED UNTO THE GOSPEL

(Romans 1:1)

AFORISMENOS—Translated “separated” in Luke 6:22: “excommunicated,” set apart.

Oh servants of Christ, read this: “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake.” (Luke 6:22).

Hatred first, followed by reproach and excommunication and finally, proclaimed as evil. Separated unto the Gospel is as much as saying “excommunicated” because of the Gospel. We repeat: “unto the Gospel,” not by means of ecclesiastic proselytism that often is an adulterated Gospel—that is not Gospel. The excommunication is of varying degrees. The least serious is that of not having communion, to be qualified as strangers in exile, not always physically persecuted but with whom one does not like to have a relationship. At most, there can be tolerance but never communion—unless one arrives at the same desire of accepting the Savior.

It is not possible to be truly “separated” unto the Gospel and to enjoy the approval of the world—we mean to say of the spirit of the world in the triplicate concupiscence of the flesh, of the eyes and pride of life. Where such concupiscence dominates—that is, the world dominates—the one who is separated unto the Gospel is unpopular. To be smiled upon by the world and to be separated unto the Gospel is not possible. Either Christ or Mammon.

But what does this language have to do with the churches? Much! We are in the dispensation of the Apostolic time. Civilization and progress do not change the fundamental lines. GOD or MAMMON (1st John 4:5, 6). O you who read,

how is the world treating you? (And there is much world even in the churches)! Are you separated, excommunicated for the Gospel--that is to say, do you portray, uplift JESUS CHRIST?

FALSE SHEPHERDS – DUMB DOGS

(Zechariah 11:15-17; Ezekiel 34:1-4; Isaiah 56:10-12)

Since there are "false sheep," there are false shepherds. Neither such sheep nor such shepherds will pay attention to these messages since they do not listen even to the One who is in all and above all. The holy words of Peter and of other apostles were smashed in the obstinacy of the priests who wanted, at any cost, silence on the Name of the Blessed One. Neither the live testimony of the lame man who was healed, nor at a later time when the doors had been found closed and the guards in place, and the apostles were out of the prison (Acts 3, 4 and 5) served to bend them. Whatever may be the final terminus of the false ones, a terminus that is in the hands of God, it is our duty to expose them in order to allow what is true to shine even more. And in order that the people of God are informed of the evil, to guard themselves against it, because false sheep and false shepherds attempt to dominate even upright souls. In Zechariah 11:15 and 16 we read: "And the Lord said unto me, take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd. For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is

broken, nor feed that that standeth still; but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.”

We have mentioned elsewhere—and besides, it is well known—that the golden calf costs. The false shepherds—mercenaries—“eat the flesh of the fat, and tear out their claws;” they do all they can to keep them subservient.

The Scripture is rich in allusions to such mercenaries. We hasten to bring before us an expression that, if we do not err, is found only once in the Bible, and it is: “Dumb dogs.” (Isaiah 56:10): “His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.” They are silent when they should be shouting and sounding the alarm.

It is written in Proverbs 31:8: “Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.”

One of us happened to be in some little group of persons where something that was not true, or was not properly understood, or was exaggerated, was being discussed against someone who was absent and was not a friend of the listener. It was the others who were speaking evil and not he—but he knew that things were not as discussed, or that it was not right to discuss it. He would have liked to be silent, excusing himself that he was not the one who was saying it; he could have enjoyed the sad satisfaction that someone—who was not his friend—was being denigrated. But the Holy Spirit (Blessed Spirit) knocked on his heart, and whispered, “What would you like one to do if you were the absent one and others were slandering you?” The great and comprehensive admonition of Matthew 7:12 reappeared in shining characters, and that someone, although vexed by memories and although enticed by those who were before him who were saying to him that that certain someone had mistreated

even him, and they were referring to dark insults, he suffocated his emotions and opened his mouth and clarified that which was proper to clarify, declaring the good of the distant adversary, or exhorting silence. But by acting in such a manner, that someone placed himself between two groups of mistreaters: the old ones to whom he had not yielded, and the new ones whom he had irritated by contradicting them.

Ah, dear ones, living before Jesus costs; little by little, it costs everything. The great verse Matthew 7:12, let us read and re-read it; it condenses the Law and the prophets. "Open your mouth for the dumb"—he is about to perish. Run to help. And if the one who is dumb is your enemy, so much the better; the sacrifice is more acceptable to the Lord. Be an enemy to no one—only to yourself. Oh my brother, welcome the errant ones, those who are running away. Be to them like a refuge in a rainstorm, a rock in a dry and desert place. Live and work in such a way that an enemy of yours may be safe in your hands.

But the false shepherd! He who has opened, and opens his mouth in evil and in ensnaring in order to grasp as much as he can, suddenly has become prudent, of a human prudence. He opens his mouth when the word hurts. He keeps silent when a word is necessary and right. He plays dumb; he tightens his lips as if he knows or understands nothing, because living for the present, desirous of not creating enemies, he does not want to contradict. If he opens his mouth, he does it in such an equivocal manner that one cannot understand what he is thinking, what he is saying, in a language that has a double meaning. Dumb dogs! Blind watchmen! They have been bought, and are disposed to let themselves be bought; they do not want to have enemies. A morsel thrown to them, silences them as the criminals do to watchdogs, if the dogs have not been disciplined not to eat that which is given to them by strangers. No more than that.

To the wearisome picture, we oppose another. Jesus spoke when silence would have taken the basis for accusation away from his enemies. He remained silent when by speaking He would have ingratiated Himself with the governor. He is our example and our strength. He, the Chief Shepherd, who forms the assistant shepherds, and renders them able to keep silent for their personal advantage (like dumb lambs), but makes them like lions, and to speak out when it concerns God and others.

THE THREE CRUCIFIED ONES

(Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20; 6:14; Luke 23:33)

On the desolate place, selected for its purpose, three crosses were constructed on which three men expired: two thieves, and between these two, the INNOCENT ONE. He divided them. They are both thieves and they represent all of humanity. Their terminal point depended upon *how they shall have profited by being in the company of the ONE who was dying near them*. Both began to join in the chorus of insults against the INNOCENT ONE; then one stopped and was absorbed in a silence of contemplation. The cross had immobilized their hands and feet but, although they suffered torments, they were left with a certain liberty to their mind, to their eyes, to their tongue. While one continued in the abuse, the other was observing in silence. How much there is to observe at Calvary! Suddenly, in a burst of disdain toward his companion and of reverence toward the nearby Martyr,

he reprimanded the first, and then addressed a prayer to the second. Mixed in with the reprimand and the supplication, there is the confession of his sad past, and the implicit decision that the association with his companion, a malefactor like him and condemned like him, that the union between them was finished; finished in his heart, since by other means it had stopped from the moment of their judgment.

One of the insults directed to Jesus by the two unfortunate ones and then by only one of them was: "Come down off the cross..."—words which were not believed by those who were pronouncing them; and not even the malefactor who kept silent believed them. But the latter began to think that the INNOCENT ONE must truly be a King—the King. Jesus compensated for the avalanche of insults at first by the prayer to the Father, and then by the tender care of the mother and of John. He also was tempted; but He conquered. The cross impedes neither being tempted, nor sinning, nor offering supplications.

They were three dead people, in a legal sense, by the fact that in that posture death would come. They were dying—not dead. The crucified ones agonized at length, and their end came slowly. In the meantime, as we have said, they had the possibility of thinking, of looking, of speaking.

Such are the saints. Crucified with Christ, dying—in faith, as destiny, dead, and yet alive in order that, from that condition, either to LOSE or to ASCEND high, higher to the summit of the Kingdom of God.

APES AND PARROTS – PEACOCKS

(2nd Chronicles 9:21)

“For the king’s ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks (parrots). (2nd Chronicles 9:21).

Admired by many foreigners, Solomon, the Peaceful one—type of the Prince of Peace—received many goods and gifts. From time to time, suitable ships brought to Jerusalem “gold, silver and ivory” as well as apes and peacocks (some translations say “parrots;” most of them say “peacocks.”) The Scripture is faithful in recounting even strange mixtures. Gold, silver, ivory—beside their intrinsic value, they are great symbols of heavenly goods—adornments in the Temple, and the like. 1st Corinthians 3:12 refers to gold and silver; and Psalm 45:9, Song of Solomon 5:14 and 7:4 refer to ivory. But apes and parrots or peacocks symbolize what? First of all we ask ourselves if Solomon is the complete type of Jesus Christ. He is only in part; in fact, there are no complete types in everything, each one of them illustrating one aspect and not the whole. We will imitate Solomon in his prayer for Wisdom, in building and dedicating the Temple, but in many other things, not only can we not imitate him, we must remember him as an example of the danger that exists in prosperity.

Apes and parrots or peacocks were imported, together with many other things. Let us meditate. The apes are animals that imitate (and there is more): parrots repeat words without understanding them. And peacocks are a figure of vanity and of other things that are better not mentioned. But—but what does this have to do with the churches? What? Reader, ask it

of the Lord and of your conscience. Then, pray with me: "Lord, may we distinguish and hold ourselves only to that which is of Jesus Christ."

SIMON, I HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY UNTO THEE

(Luke 7:40)

Reader, for "Simon," let each one of us substitute our own name. The Lord has something to say to you—to say to me. Not having been asked in an audible voice, He answers, asking.

We invite the reader to read again about the event recorded in Luke 7:36-40. The Pharisee, externally correct, was spying on the conduct of Jesus: scandalized by the fact that the poor woman was crying at the feet of Jesus and that Jesus allowed her to do so, he confirmed within himself the secret judgment that he caressed in his soul—that Jesus could not be a prophet. He kept silent, hiding his thoughts under a serious mask, apparently respectful and correct. Jesus interrupted him in his soliloquy, "answering" him. Simon had not asked—but in his thoughts, without being aware of it, he was questioning.

It is not easy to gain the attention of certain men, especially at certain times. Therefore the Master—such He is—spoke in a manner to be heard: "Simon..."—Jesus calls us by name—

“I have somewhat...”—not much, because Jesus touches on one item at a time—“to say unto thee.”

And the other: “Master, say on.” There follows the incomparable parable of the two debtors, both insolvent, both forgiven, and the question: “Which of them will love him most?” The question seemed superfluous to the cunning man, but he did not know that a personal application would have quickly followed. “I—THOU—SHE,” with that “wherefore...,” and the assurance of forgiveness for the penitent one.

The immediate purpose of this writing is to say to me—to you—that often we have been Simon Pharisees—to say that Jesus Christ has something to say to us, in answer to certain of our evil, envious, jealous manners of speaking, covered by the mask of silence. May this writing shake us to decide to have a new life in the intimacy of the heart, and to understand certain words read superficially: Justice, service in the spirit, intense and unfeigned love; to realize that God reads the thoughts, and that we become according to the things that we think about.

It is not out of place to read again Philippians 4:8,9: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned and received and heard and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”

Only to the one who is trained in heavenly thoughts does the God of Peace come and remain. If we would pay attention to certain words that come out without thinking, we would ask the Lord to be discovered, judged and corrected. Let us read Matthew 12:35-37. Although some words may seem to be innocent, they are not; they start from secret images in the

inner chapel of the soul. Rather than forcing ourselves to suffocate them, let us thank the Lord that He has allowed us to hear them, in order to go in penitence to Him who seeks to discover us in order to redeem us from ourselves.

Many so-called Christians live for a long time in a fanciful holiness that is not real; they do not remember that we must be purged from all contamination—not only of the flesh (in the visible), but of the spirit. Oh, the territory of the invisible where one begins to resemble either the Lamb or, alas, the dragon! Everything comes to judgment, and nothing is hidden that must be discovered. Blessed are we if we love to be discovered NOW; therefore we are brought to the Light—therefore we are brought to the washing with the Blood of Jesus Christ (1st John 1:3-7).

As soon as temptations, thoughts, bad images present themselves, we must immediately expose them to the light of the Lord. If we see evil, we must pray. No one can pray for any length of time and remain hostile to others, because by praying, one learns to love, as it is true that by loving, one is guided to pray.

There are no secrets before God and neither can there be too many secrets among the elect for any length of time. Let us read Ecclesiastes 10:20: "Curse not the king, no, not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter." Whatever may be "the bird of the air" and "that which hath wings," it is certain that thoughts travel, and are read, at least by some. There are vibrations that attract and that repel.

In the light of Heaven we learn that we are continuously before a Tribunal where accusers, accused, witnesses and judges are moving. Blessed is the one who is judged, absolved and adjusted now. Such a person has already

passed from death into life, and lives in the heavens as in his city. Amen.

ANOTHER KING – ONE JESUS

(Acts 17:6, 7)

Often enemies, although motivated by hatred, see more clearly than friends. "He said, 'I am the Son of God...'" cried many into the ears of Pilate. On the occasion to which our subject refers, the enemies said clearly that another King was being proclaimed. It is time for the Church to occupy itself a little more with this other King, and that, in a precise way, it will receive His Kingdom (Hebrews 12:27-29). The Jews drew Jason and certain of the brethren to the rulers of the city, crying: "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also... These all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is ANOTHER king, one Jesus." They were saying the truth except for the accusation against the statutes of Caesar, because Christians have never denied to Caesar that which belongs to Caesar. However, the earthly sovereign was not being mentioned because of love, because the Jews have never loved foreign governments, but if a name was mentioned, it was because it was necessary to present a certain someone in opposition to Jesus.

This is the ancient method, always in use until such time as the King of Heaven shall have definitively annulled all the earthly powers. It is also the political method among

religious sects to uplift someone, not for love toward him, but for hatred toward another.

“These that have turned the world upside down...” There is agitation wherever Jesus is truly announced with a precious proclamation that He is wanted as King. A sincere saying: Thy Kingdom come, with an invitation to receive Him.

When the Wise Men asked where He might be Who was BORN KING, Jerusalem and the false king were troubled. It is the same at all times, also among religious groups, except among the few who are Zion, the stronghold, who have already elected—accepted—Jesus as their King. The little, false kings—the ward leaders—dominators of souls—turn pale and must flee where the King Jesus makes His way. So many little lords—dominators of flocks—criplers of sheep—must flee elsewhere when the true King is put on the throne. It is a battle between two potentates, each of whom has a following. “Another King” does not mean only another individual, but “different” in character. Not a sovereign who commands, forcing into slavery, and exploiting, but One who, in a wave of love, has given His life for His subjects and lives to help them, and for Whom obedience is spontaneous and with joy.

He is Another King—Jesus!

MEDITATING

(Isaiah 33:14-18; Psalm 45:7)

“Hate wickedness, but love even a wicked person.” Be slow, however, to qualify, because we are ignorant of the motives of the hearts, the circumstances and the like (1st Cor. 4:1-5).

If one should ask me for some suggestion based on experience, I would answer thus: Cultivate justice in the spirit. God is just, because He paid for us. He justifies through SUFFERING. Likewise also those who shall have justified many (Daniel 12). Elihu said to Job, “I desire to justify thee.” If one should ask me which among the qualifications received—and yes, there have been a few—was most to my honor, I answer by reporting the words of someone who had no ties to me: “One may say (of him) what one wishes (and I add that much can be said in a contrary sense), it is necessary to recognize that an enemy has nothing to fear from him.” Oh what a high ideal! Defend, where possible, even the enemies—especially the enemies. If we cannot say something good, we can at least remain silent! Nothing good? – But in all men, while God Himself has not abandoned them entirely, there is a little bit of good. I was surprised in reading again in the original, Luke 6:28: “Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.” In the text it is: “Praise those who are cursing you!” Pretending? Oh, NO. James 3:14 admonishes not to pretend. We must praise those who curse us; that is, whereas he—poor man—instigated by the accuser and mendaciously throws dust and mud against us, we—scrutinizing in him the good that is there, be it even a little—place it in prominence. He curses—we bless. That is, we speak well of him and we wish him well.

Unfortunately, many times our enemies are right, and have a right to our gratitude. And if, who knows, the evil they say is

invented or exaggerated, they still benefit us, because they give us the opportunity to pray for them and to speak well of them.

We ask ourselves if it is possible for us to obey Luke 6:28. It is impossible to us, except that, as contemplators of the Just One—having become our justice—we also live loving justice, and hating not the creatures, but the iniquity of which they are victims.

SEEING – TASTING, DEATH

(John 8:51, 52; 11:25; Hebrews 9:15)

“Thy brother shall rise again.” Martha, as if to echo that great affirmation, as if she were convinced of the truth, replied with words that in substance are an abstraction and a generality. “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” It was a declaration about a far-off event, excluding a present faith having a precise object.

Jesus wants to lead us to that which is precise and it is “NOW.” “Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?” (John 11:25, 26).

How Martha must have understood His words can be seen from the fact that before the sepulcher, when Jesus

commanded to take away the stone, she, as if alarmed, observed that "he (Lazarus) by this time stinketh..." In reality, she had not believed.

The words of Jesus: "If thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God" go beyond that scene, because Lazarus would have returned to life anyway—as he returned. The "if thou wouldest believe" is literally "if you want—are disposed—to believe."

We ask ourselves what Jesus meant to say in the words: "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Let us open to other pages of the Scripture. Let us read John 8:51, 52. Let us take note of the language. "If a man keep my saying (of Jesus)—he shall never see death." The Jews, quibbling, repeated His words, changing one. Jesus did not say that "he shall never taste of death..." but "he shall not see death." The difference is great. For the saint, there is no death (seeing—realizing), but only a "tasting," having a little taste of it—that is to face the shadow of it.

In the Gospel of Matthew 16:28 (and references), Jesus said: "Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom." (v. 28). There are two different words also in the text: SEEING – TASTING.

The apostles all died—that is, "they tasted death." The Lord wants us to differentiate. In fact, in Hebrews 2:15 we read: "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." The benefits of the death and resurrection of Jesus are vast and manifold, and become ours in the measure that we believe and accept. He does not want us to live in these bodies preoccupied and trembling with fear because of the scarecrow of death, but that we are delivered from fear. We must pass from this life in order to

enter into another: Flesh and blood does not enter—in fact—into the Kingdom of Heaven.

The death of the saints is precious in His sight. He has prepared special consolations for the moribund. We must believe that. It is true that death is called the last enemy, but in the light of Psalm 110—for the one who abides in Him—an enemy is a footstool for bringing us higher. Death, the last enemy, is the final rung in the ladder for entering into Heaven.

BUT I HATE HIM

(1st Kings 22:8)

“And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.” (1st Chron. 22:8). I have heard of a daughter who commented to the mother about her benevolence (of the mother) toward all men; she knew how to speak well of everyone, be it even a little. She said to her: “Mamma, you would speak well even of Satan.” “Ah, my daughter,” answered the elder lady, “would that you should imitate in doing good, the perseverance that Satan has in doing evil.”

From everything—from everyone—we can learn something. Let us apply this to Ahab, one of the worst kings of the

kingdom of Israel. As he wished to fight the Syrians to recover Ramothgilead, Jehoshaphat exhorted him to inquire of the Lord. Ahab gathered his prophets together, about four hundred men. They, with one voice, encouraged the undertaking. But Jehoshaphat was not persuaded by the noise of that crowd. "And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?" (v. 7). Ahab answered as we have already described (v. 8). He spoke the truth, affirming that there was the prophet of God, and that through him one could truly ask the Lord—however, he added: "I hate him." The hatred of Ahab was greater than the terror he should have felt from the message of Micaiah. He went to battle and he perished. And yet, we must acknowledge that in saying what he said—in that—he was honest. He was not ashamed to say what he felt, notwithstanding that he knew the truth. He confessed: "I hate him." Oh, sincerity of Christ!

THREE RUINS

(1st Timothy 1:19; 6:21; 2nd Timothy 2:18)

Let us read 1st Timothy 1:19: "Holding faith, and a good conscience, which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck." The warning is: Exercise your conscience—this secret is a vigilant monitor—to be always blameless before God and before men. Notice even the least vibrations in order not to become hardened to the point of no longer feeling anything. Faith and good conscience go

together. Keep yourself sensitive to the voice, to the warnings, of the Holy Spirit. One who neglects and drowns the voice of the conscience, makes shipwreck of the faith.

How much useless, if not outright evil, talk. How many strange thoughts and rash judgments. Pay attention to your mind and to your heart that they are under the control of God. (Philippians 4:8, 9; Proverbs 4:23).

Remember that when Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus, he was not saying anything, but he was thinking evil. "This man...would have known!" The insulting "this man." Perhaps his appearance was correct but Jesus read his thoughts and stopped him: "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee...!" (Luke 7:39, 40). Oh reader, put your name in the place of Simon's. Perhaps the Lord has something to say to you. Blessed are you if He tells you, because there is a time when He no longer speaks. And blessed are you if you accept it.

THEREFORE PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR CONSCIENCE

Let us read also 1st Timothy 6:20, 21. The appeal is insistent and perhaps written among the tears. The old apostle foresaw a danger. "Keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called." "Oppositions..." Pay attention.

Some, although deceiving themselves to be Christians, have erred from the faith. Oh, the simplicity of Jesus Christ.

And let us read also 2nd Timothy 2:16-18. Vanity of voices. It is vanity to want to say more than the Holy Spirit teaches. Food should be given at the proper time and in the right measure. Daily bread. Don't try to know, to probe beyond the Grace. Pay attention. Some who wanted to know too much ended by no longer believing in the future, asserting that the resurrection was only for this life. And what is this if it is not denying the Lord? There is in this life an earnest anticipation of resurrection. There is—but this binds us more to Heaven and to the future. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." (1st Corinthians 15:19).

Oh my brother, walk behind the footsteps of Jesus. Don't go ahead of Him because you will fall into foolishness. Don't follow from afar lest you deny Him. Follow Him step by step, faithfully, and you will reach a happy goal—eternal beginning that shall have no end.

THE VOICE OF THE LORD

(Deut. 4:12; John 10:16, 27; Psalm 29)

There are many voices—distinguish, hear His voice. A WARNING: There is a danger among us, both in speaking and in hearing, and this is because we do not explain

ourselves clearly, or we do not hear with an honest and sincere heart. Let the one who speaks forget himself and speak as an oracle of God, depending word for word on the Holy Spirit, asking for and receiving grace in the tongue and in the lips. But one who hears must pay attention to how he hears—listens.

No amount of talking, as clear and as detailed as it may be, expresses everything. There is a danger of neglecting the Scriptures, boasting that we want to be guided only by the VOICE—and likewise, there is a danger that we seek guidance in the written word for everything, not paying attention to—not desiring—the VOICE. The guidance is by the VOICE. The written word—for those to whom the written word is presented by Heaven itself (Holy Spirit)—comes afterward (Jeremiah 7:22-24; Deuteronomy 4:12).

Striving for impartiality, we note that the apostle Paul exhorts to pray that “Christ—the Anointed—may dwell in your hearts...” (Ephesians 3:17), and that likewise His Word may abound in us. (Col. 3:16). It is certain that Jesus is the incarnate Word, but He uses—when, where and how—even the Holy Spirit as a witness (John 5:39).

Using the written word as a manual guide, premeditating what verses are suited to various occasions, atrophies the intuitive, receptive capacity for hearing from Heaven, according to the times, places and persons. Those leaflets that list verses for each occasion, tell you: “When thus—read such and such, etc.” But there are times when the same verse does not offer the comfort of other times. It is the Holy Spirit that, each time, comforts, illumines, teaches, and then—and not even always—points to some Scripture. They are the two signs: from on High and from below. Those who always travel by horse and carriage become unfit and unwilling to

use their legs. Gains in one line, if not equilibrated, are losses in another line.

THE VOICE. There is the VOICE of the words (Exodus 15:26). Voice of the commands. There can be a "YES" in the letter and a "NO" in the voice. The spies, according to the letter, were ordered by God Himself (Numbers 13), and yet it was only a permission due to the mistrust of the people who wanted them (Deuteronomy 1:22, 23). The case of Balaam is known. The permission to go was hiding a great "Do not go." The command to David to number the people (2nd Samuel 24) had a "No" in the voice (1st Chronicles 21). The Psalmist informs us that the angels obey THE VOICE of the Word of the Lord (Psalm 103:20).

THE VOICE (Psalm 29)! Worthy of special mention is the introduction to Psalm 29. "Give unto the Lord, O ye mighty. Give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto His Name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." (vv. 1 & 2). In the magnificent sanctuary, in the beauty of holiness—thence he describes the voice of the Lord. At first, where it is made to be heard: "upon the waters," and it is with thundering. Then the "how"—that is, with power united with majesty. The effects follow: It "breaketh the cedars"—the obstinacy and the pride of man. It produces joy—it is understood—in the upright souls. It disseminates rays of light. The desert is a desolate place, apparently without life. The voice of the Lord makes the desert tremble—like a beginning of life. Glory in the Temple. Already in another Psalm (19), also attributed to the man after God's heart, we have read something, that it is the voice, and not the words as we understand them: "Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." (vv. 2 & 3). If we do not begin by hearing the "Voice," we will never reach the point of hearing

the words and, therefore, will not even understand the Scriptures, nor be able to adapt them according to the time and the circumstances. Jesus Christ—Shepherd of our souls—has said, says, in John 10:16: “And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd.” They seem to be strangers, but they are not. That which qualifies them as His Sheep is the Voice. “They shall hear my voice.” And in fact, the essential attribute of the sheep is: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” (v. 27).

Blessed VOICE! It reveals the Name and the supreme will of God. Blessed is he who loves it, listens to it, familiarizes himself with it. Such an individual shall be led also with signs and witnessing, and shall always be brought back to the Voice. Amen.

BEWARE

(Philippians 3:2)

“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.” (Philippians 3:2). May the Lord grant us to understand and to apply the above words to our time, whatever the reasons. It is the Holy Spirit that applies spiritual things (and senses) to spiritual things. “Beware...” The expression is strong, implying accurate discernment in order to keep one’s distance. The word is repeated:

Beware—Beware—Beware—as if to say that it is not enough to keep watch against only one enemy or, rather, against a single form of enmity.

“Dogs...”—impure, noisy animals that disturb the quiet of the city. (Take note of the word in the Psalms, especially in Psalm 59:6).

“...and ye shall be holy unto me: neither shall ye eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; ye shall cast it to the dogs.” (Exodus 22:31. There is much in that “torn flesh.” Cast it—barely touching it—to the dogs. Meditate also Deuteronomy 23:18. Money gained by adulterated religion, and by the dog (of contention) has no place in the Sanctuary.

The wicked workers are known by this: they are occupied in uplifting themselves or a party—and not Jesus Christ. Abraham’s servant and John the Baptist did not even say how they were called; each was occupied with the mission he had received. Such wicked workers are mentioned in Philippians 3:18.

The last part of the “Beware,” applying it to these times because every age has special dangers, is what we can call “Voluntary religion,” human efforts by which some people impose sacrifices of which the Holy Spirit does not approve, and which distract the soul from trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His justice.

He—Jesus—knows what is in man, and wants to deliver us from every mixture and seduction in order that, abiding in Him, we bear fruit—that is, His fruit. Amen.

ALL THESE THINGS ARE AGAINST ME

(Genesis 42:36)

“And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me.” (Genesis 42:36). These are words that ring like an explosion of an accumulated and intense pain.

Rachel—dead and buried on the way to Bethlehem.

Joseph—thought to be torn to pieces and devoured by a wild beast.

They tried to comfort Jacob but he refused to be comforted. The mourning, if there was any, for those who were ignorant of the happening, was for a time, but—his father wept for him... And now, as if all of the past since when, because of terror for Esau, he had fled from the paternal home, the twenty years of hard service in the cold of the night and the heat of the day, the death of his beloved spouse and of Joseph were rising again in his heart; now even this: Simeon, a prisoner in a strange land—and that is not enough: also Benjamin, the last son, born when Rachel died while bringing him to light, Now even Benjamin...!

Joseph and Benjamin were the image and remembrance of Rachel. “All these things are against me.” One large wave after another poured down upon him.

But the holy man did not know that just by means of “all these things” the Lord was unfolding the plan of that which He had promised him in the night of Bethel, and which then

was confirmed when he was given the name “Israel—Prince of God.”

AFTER THE EVENTS HAVE PASSED, THE ELECT SEE IN THEM THE HAND—THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

THE WILL OF THE GENTILES

(1st Peter 4:3)

“For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, reveling, banqueting, and abominable idolatries.” (1st Peter 4:3). If we ask ourselves what the will of the Gentiles may be, the answer is in the cited words—but they are the amplified echo of that which Another said. Let us read again Matthew 6:19-34. In verse 32 we have read that the Gentiles seek after all these things.

The seed of the message of St. Peter is in the words of Jesus. But in His words there is no mention at all of how the apostle qualified “the will of the Gentiles.” Jesus did not say anything about lasciviousness, etc. Therefore, should we say that the disciple saw more or better than the Master? No—that must not be said. But we will reflect that the anxiety for that which is innocent and legitimate, that is the Will of the Gentiles, and therefore, such anxiety, preoccupation, leads in its effects to the evils indicated by the Apostle—that is, to lasciviousness, lusts, etc. Jesus places the ax to the root of

the evil. If we harmonize the words of the disciples with those of the Master—and we must—we shall discover that great evils follow as a result of not having paid attention to that which seems not to be dangerous in itself.

It means, in conclusion, that we cannot serve God and Mammon. Without extending ourselves in portraying Mammon, we note that from the very words of the Lord can be deduced in what way one falls under the dominion of Mammon. "What shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" These are questions that in themselves are not sinister—but that, read in the "root" that pronounces them, they indicate a heart that is alien to the Lord. God has created us—therefore He Himself cares for us, His creation. Creating is more important than nourishing and dressing. And it is a marvel that only after years of trials, Christians arrive at the most simple of affirmations: God has created; we are His creatures—creation. We have not created ourselves (Psalm 100:3). This seems to be, and is, elementary, but precisely because it is simple and elementary, we are slow to understand it and to establish ourselves in it. Whatever our relationship with God may be, the enemy is ready to insinuate doubts. But no one can object to this simple affirmation: Even a worm is a creature of God; even puppies have a right to a little food; even little ravens cry for food. Great is the final height of faith. Oh reader, say this often to yourself: "God has created me; I am His." And if you are His, why do you doubt; why are you anxious? He, more than you, is interested in you. What are you afraid of?

Therefore, what is the will of the Gentiles? It is the anxiety for tomorrow—the total of the many preoccupations that assail men about urgent needs. Occupied and preoccupied with so many things, with future events or far-away places, we do not pay attention to that which is immediate and near—hence all the evils. *Anxiety for that which in itself is*

not sin, leads to sin. Jesus has indicated the root of the evil; the Holy Spirit that interprets Him and His words has indicated the consequences.

The remedy: The words reported in St. Matthew were pronounced on the Mount to disciples who had followed Him—and are part of that unique message that is called the Sermon on the Mount. Let us also follow Him, and set out to listen to Him, calm and seated who, opening His mouth, begins by saying “Blessed.” Let us hear Him—line after line—and we will arrive at the great affirmation: God has created me—therefore, He cares for me.

Our part is: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” (St. Matthew 6:33, 34). Oh, great Rest in JESUS CHRIST!

EBEN – EZER

(1st Samuel 7:12)

There is power in the word—in the words—when they are repeated to us, and by us, by means of the Holy Spirit. It is not always necessary for our mind to understand the meaning. It is one thing to converse with and about man, and quite another to converse with and about the Lord. Many

times, a few expressions in a strange tongue—having come we don't know how—have uplifted our spirit and even invigorated our body.

The one who writes knows from experience how much good he receives when, without premeditating, he pronounces that Blessed Name. The territory of the Spirit is vast and solemn.

After the heroes of Genesis and Exodus, some of whom were prophets, there was a relative silence for hundreds of years, and then the Lord gave a rare man to the people: Samuel. Israel had been prostrated under the hand of the Philistines, and the Lord granted them deliverance and victory by the ministry of Samuel. Please read again chapter seven of the first book of Samuel, especially verses 7 to 10: "And when the Philistines heard that the children of Israel were gathered together to Mizpeh, the lords of the Philistines went up against Israel. And when the children of Israel heard it, they were afraid of the Philistines. And the children of Israel said to Samuel, Cease not to cry to the Lord for us, that He will save us out of the hand of the Philistines. And Samuel took a sucking lamb, and offered it for a burnt offering wholly unto the Lord: and Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord heard him. And as Samuel was offering up the burnt offering, the Philistines drew near to battle against Israel; but the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel. And the men of Israel went out of Mizpeh, and pursued the Philistines, and smote them, until they came under Beth-car. Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us. So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel; and the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel. And the cities which the Philistines had taken from Israel were restored to Israel, from Ekron

even unto Gath; and the coasts thereof did Israel deliver out of the hands of the Philistines. And there was peace between Israel and the Amorites. And Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life.”

It was the Lord who defeated the enemies, while the prophet, acting also as a Priest, offered the sucking lamb. After the deliverance, we read, “Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.”

The place where Samuel placed the stone is noteworthy: between Mizpeh and Shen (cliff). Mizpeh—a name of historic significance, when there was the separation between Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31:49). Mizpeh—Lookout—Watchtower. Between the watching and the cliff—danger—there was placed a stone—a monument—a remembrance: Eben-ezer—that is, “Up to this place, the Lord has helped us.” Let us remember that the victory over the Philistines was preceded by penitence and confession of the people and by the offering of the sacrifice. The past is a guarantee for the future. The One who has helped in the past is willing and able to help also in the future, provided that we watch, we pray, and we trust in Jesus Christ.

And let us pray that in the midst of the continual and various conflicts and dangers, we—penitent and full of faith—remember the past benefits and are thankful for them, and that the Holy Spirit will draw out of our mouths this great affirmation: “EBEN-EZER.” Amen.

THE GOD OF PATIENCE

“PATIENCE,” a hard and bitter word for the unbeliever—but for one who believes, it is a great and holy word. It grants to God the time He wants to allow His plan to triumph in us, and by means of us.

Someone heard these words repeatedly—he does not remember if it was in the spirit or how: “Patience: the station that precedes the arrival.” Being patient is an index of perfection because such a virtue is, if not the last one, it is among the later ones to appear in the life of saints. Nor should one misunderstand “patience” for that natural calmness that many possess because of a happy temperament. No. The patience of God shines—as do all of His things—by reason of contrast. It is the daughter of discipline, at times a lengthy one, and is in contrast, many times, to a lively and resentful character. Patience is not an outward calm while the insides are rumbling. That can be human prudence and never divine. No. The man of God learns to be patient in the spirit. Only such an individual is strong, because he waits for the One who is Strong.

The Lord who wants us to be patient uses painful procedures. It is written: “We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope.” (Romans 5:3,4). Indeed, those who have suffered are more rooted in hope and confidence.

Elsewhere it is said: “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” (James 1:2,3). And he exhorts us to allow ourselves to be worked by patience, so that it may do a perfect work, and whole, wanting nothing. Therefore, one

who remains under the discipline not pleasing to the flesh, from patience, he is brought to being perfect.

In outlining the last days, speaking of wars, of earthquakes and persecutions, the Lord Jesus says, among other things: "Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and the children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my Name's sake." (Mark 13:12, 13). He adds "...there shall not an hair of your head perish..." that is, nothing will happen that may be contrary to His plan. Unless He wants it, not even a hair of one's head shall perish; and yet many shall be killed. He knows and governs everything; this is what it means. And He adds also: "In your patience possess ye your souls." Another version expresses it: "By your patient perseverance, you will preserve your souls." (Luke 21:9-19). He, Blessed Lord, calls "our patience" that which He shall have given to us, and of which He has given us such an admirable example in a life which, more than any other, had need of patience; patience for the long time of expectation, before beginning; patience for the intensity of the provocations and pressures around Him.

We must, in that school, learn *His* patience; keep the word of His patience (Rev. 3:10). Keep watch—be a sentinel—because there is nothing where one is more tested than in patience. Be it in the time of waiting, and be it for the intensity of tests: Word of His patience! God is patient toward a world in which many deny Him and distrust Him continually; it seems that He does not even listen, that He does not even exist. It is difficult for the vindictive, impatient man to understand His patience. Grace is needed to understand it, and grace to keep watch on it (preserve it). But why are we speaking of the world? Let each one of us consider with how much patience God has tolerated and is

tolerating us. At times, we no longer have patience even with ourselves, and He has it, and exhorts us to be patient even with ourselves, because we are His property; He loves us and will accomplish, in each one, that which He has predestinated, if we let Him work—if we keep watch on the word of His patience.

According to how much we can bear, little by little we make the humiliating discovery of our deformities; but He “knew everything.” Thus says the Psalmist: “My substance was not hid from Thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.” (Psalm 139:15-16). Who knows how many of us, precisely at this time, are worked in some low part of the earth. He must hide the process from our eyes, else we would flee. “Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect.” What patience is the patience of God! How much he has excused us and excuses us! “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” (2nd Peter 3:9).

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord.” Beside the final COMING, there is a coming for every thing that must be adjusted by Him. “Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.” (James 5:7-8). For each thing, it is necessary to wait for the early and the latter rain, the latter in reference to that certain gathering for each fruit, and between the first and the last, all the rainfall that He will want to send. Patience in waiting for Him; patience in suffering; patience with ourselves; patience among ourselves. “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and

comfort of the scriptures might have hope (something that wants to escape)." The men of God were patient, even though at times it seems that they were not. They had to learn patience. We are invited to consider the patience of Job who failed in many things, but who never rebelled against God, as much as the appearance sometimes might make it appear to the contrary. In the root of his soul, he was patient. The holy writer tells us this, in the light of the New Covenant (James 5:11).

To be of one accord in the church is one of the most difficult things. The Lord must bring us to unity. He will do that which is impossible to us. He has as many titles for as many as there are of our needs. "Now the God of patience..." He Himself. Someone translates it: "of that patience," (which is His patience) "...and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another." (ONE TOWARD ANOTHER).

Oh! the difficulties in the very (among the very) people of God! —All things are given to us in the Son—"Grant you according to CHRIST JESUS." (Romans 15:5).

UNLESS I HAD BELIEVED...

(Psalm 27:13)

"Admired for gentleness of manner, for an imperturbable calmness which could be attributed to an extraordinary felicity of temperament; and (but) it was the effect of a

constant discipline over a lively and resentful temperament." Thus a great writer depicts one of the best men whose history we have. And we too have admired such men, indeed not many, in whom patience and sweetness seemed, at a superficial glance, to be innate, whereas they were, by temperament, vivacious and impulsive. It is good to understand this in the lives of the saints, because as it is said of Elijah, they were—are—subject to the same passions as we (James 5:11). For a time it has seemed to us, and it seems to many, that some men who are resigned and benevolent, calm in the storms, and ready to sacrifice, are such by natural disposition; whereas they are such by strict discipline on themselves, submitted to the Great Master. Lamenting one time of his not-so-easy temperament, someone had this answer from the Lord: "I, the Lord, do not destroy temperaments, but I use them." Therefore, to say that we do not know how and are not able, is a poor excuse; the Lord is greater than any obstacle in us. If we want, He knows how to control us and use us.

We are men; in order to be encouraged, we need to see the man in the saints, and above all, to understand the Son of Man. It is written of Him that "...he was tempted in all things" like we are. "LIKE AS WE ARE—without sin." If one loves to cheer the heart of the Father, he must love and understand the humiliation of the Son Jesus. Christ depended always and in everything upon the Grace of the Father. He lived for the Father, and we too are called to live by means of Jesus.

Doing the will of God costs, and it has cost to those who obeyed it. The flesh suffers. We mean to say: the humanity in us suffers. But it is time to come down to some practical examples. The Psalmist, as if in an explosion of pain and resignation, exclaims, "...unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." He had

mentioned enemies, false witnesses, violent men, and then, as in a soliloquy, exclaimed that "Unless..."

David, the man after God's heart, was anything but unfeeling. None of the saints was unfeeling. Anyone who reads the heart of David in depth discovers flashes of violent energy. One notes in 1st Samuel 25 the fury with which he was going up to destroy all the men of the house of Nabal, and how he then became a pacified lamb in the face of the message of the prudent Abigail.

We should remember how David wanted to seek out if there might be anyone left of the house of Saul to whom he might do good for the sake of Jonathan. The insistence, however, is that he, David wanted to use the goodness of the Lord. OF THE LORD...!

"Unless I had believed..." These are words choked in thoughts which are not expressed and they say much, and above all, that he, able warrior and statesman, would have known how to bring his enemies to justice. But he had believed...he was as if imprisoned.

In the men of the New Testament, one discovers an "If..." that is understood. We do not find much in the letter; rapid hints are like flashes in the night. Not only to Paul, but also in John and in Peter we discern such rapid and illuminating flashes. The autobiographical notes of Paul to the Philippians (3:7-14) reveal an energetic and fiery temperament held, however, in check by Christ—Jesus—Lord. St. Paul seems to say, "Does any man boast? I would have much more of which to boast." "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more." (v. 4). But the fiery apostle bows his head and stops his pen. In the epistles of this great martyr, we encounter these fleeting glimmers, followed by an unexpected submission. And in John—in Peter? Yes, even in them, although not so clearly as in Paul.

If by his finger one recognizes the giant, and by one word we can deduce a discourse, we invite you to consider John 19:35 and 21:24: "And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe." "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true." These are expressions of an indirect but energetic protest, because already in those times, false teachers had succeeded in getting in, and—incredible but true—an audacious Diotrephes did not even have respect for a St. John! The son of thunder, in concentrated energy, affirms knowing that he speaks the truth, regardless of what others may think. The "IF" is not written, but it is understood, as if to say that he, John, was who he was because he had seen, had heard, had contemplated, had touched (1st John 1:1 etc.).

It doesn't take much to understand if we want to understand.

And Peter—the man who at one time was always ready, and was then disciplined to patient gentleness—also has his unwritten "IF." It can be discovered in 2nd Peter 1:16-18: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." It is an indirect way to say that he was exhorting to suffer, giving the example, because he had been with Him on the holy mountain, had seen, had heard. He could not make use of idle talk and artifices, since he had seen, had heard, had been a spectator.

But what? Do we fear in this perhaps to speak of Jesus, the Man, the perfect martyr? At the tomb of Lazarus, in the face of the scorn of the scoffers, to the "Could not this

man...?”—He shuddered. A current of fire and of pain ran through His great soul. But He kept His silence. Oh, IF, IF...how He would have known to silence His enemies! And in Mark 9:19, we read: “O faithless generation; how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him unto me.” How many “IFS” are hidden in these words!

Oh, Christ, true God and true Man, teach us to suffocate our “IFS” in the Infinite ocean of your Love and of your Power. Amen.

TWO OR THREE TIMES

(Job 33:29; Hosea 6:1-4)

TWO OR THREE—numbers of great significance in the Scripture. We remember the words of Jesus: “If two of you agree...” (as if in symphony). And “Wherever two or three are gathered in My Name.” But our theme is on the meaning of “two or three times” in Job 33:29.

We do not limit the Grace of God that is necessary to us and helps us to the extreme. We do not limit the patience of the Lord, nor the forgiveness of the One who has commanded us to forgive always, yet they indicate a limit.

Job is a saint; I would like to resemble him at least in the manner that he is portrayed in the first two chapters of the book. I say, “at least,” as for a start, since the Lord wants His elect to imitate the Job of chapter 42 of the book. We begin at least with that which is written in the first two chapters. If

the experience in which Job found himself was the first or the second or the third, we do not know. We are ignorant of the particulars of the past, except for the conclusion as written in Job 1:1: "There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil." However, it is not arbitrary to suggest that great crises may have occurred in his life.

For example, with regard to Enoch, we read: "And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah: and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." (Genesis 5:21,22). "Enoch walked with God" after the sixty-fifth year, but his life during those sixty-five years is not known. Certainly there were preparatory shakings and crises. Let us return to Job.

We think that that was the last and the most serious crisis—as Abraham's last and most serious crisis was the sacrifice of Isaac. After every great crisis there is like a new beginning: either a new beginning or nothing—or ruin.

These are lessons that must be indelibly imprinted, marking a new stage in our pilgrimage. One cannot turn back; the bridges behind one are cut. They have one message: "FORWARD." It is true that in the new lap to be run there are dangers and temptations—and therefore also help—but it is always a new walk, and no longer that of the past. One must move in the direction in which the crisis has led him. Job was brought to the alternative by Elihu: either FORWARD, or we don't know what. He could not remain the same, although he may have been blessed in the past.

These crises are like deaths and resurrections. They detach from the past and bring to newness of life. To depend on the same blessings—the same aids—is fatal. Samson delivered

himself several times, but at the end, his strength having failed, he had to realize that the Lord had abandoned him. Let us read Hosea 6:1-4. In two days we are revived—on the third, we are raised up in order that, from that time on: a new walk. That is, to be perfect, and truly walk with the Lord.

THE SECOND MESSAGE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

John 1:29, 35, 36)

The first “look” was not enough; it was necessary to look again. In the language of the Scripture the word “look” has an intense meaning. It supposes a concentration of mind in order to discover the qualities of the soul that do not appear at first sight. John had seen—with his intense seeing—the Savior, and had pointed out His work. Now he looked at Him again, fixing his eyes on His face as if to draw from His features His inner life. And not only did he look at His face, but he contemplated how He was walking.

It should be noted that the Christian life is also called “Way” or “Walk.” The character of a man is studied not only by contemplating his face but also in the way that he moves and walks, since outward actions are an index of the movements of the soul. He who ponders well the few words of the Scripture will discover that John did not hurry to the second message as soon as he saw Jesus again, but took time to absorb in himself the impression of that face and of that

walk. Afterward, as if forcing himself to interrupt the admiration that had conquered him, with words, he exclaimed: "Behold the Lamb of God." The lesson, "Who taketh away the sin of the world," had been given the day before, and he was sure that the two had clearly heard it. Now something else was needed. Those who have tasted the work of the Savior are invited, following the glance and the voice of that first messenger, to study the Lamb.

The greatest expression of love is not only in obeying and in contemplating, but in imitating to the point of resembling the beloved subject. The two, a type of the Church—that is, of a people whom the Lord has made His Church—are exhorted to look again at the face, the walk, endeavoring to know who the Lamb of God is. They knew of other lambs and various sacrifices but now, from the knowledge of many things, they had to be reduced to one alone: that of the Lamb of God. The message of sin and of salvation is very important; but in certain lessons it is necessary to forget, for the moment, even the work—in order to study the One who works. It is true that from the picture, one knows the artist, but it is also true that by looking only at the picture, we will never know the man unless, after having admired the work we turn to contemplate the artist himself. That is what the disciple must do: treasuring with gratitude the good received from the blood of Christ, he must enter the school where one learns to know the Master Himself. This is the plan of God. It is so true that Jesus has defined that Life eternal consists in knowing God and the One whom He has sent. (John 17:3).

The Lord has many titles—each one of them is an answer to our needs. The final title is: "Lamb." Certainly in the school of the Holy Spirit we learn to know Him under the various aspects, but the final one of the many lessons is "Lamb of God." So great a Benefactor proceeded from that fountain of love, from the Father. The life span of a man is not sufficient

for such an examination. The admiration of Him continues after this life. The last look of the Scripture occupies itself in preference with the Lamb; the last writing from which hope can be drawn, is the book of the Lamb.

John the Baptist did not describe the person, but he pointed Him out. No book can describe Him. Whoever begins to follow Him will begin in silence to delineate Him to himself and to know Him, and then he will be able to point Him out to others. John did not add words to the brief message, nor were they needed. The fixed, luminous gaze upon the person who was passing, the voice resonant with conviction, the precise words; the arm and the forefinger extended in that direction had the strength to separate the two disciples from their first teacher in order to lead them toward the One in whose school they had to enter.

The message bore fruit. The Scripture concludes: "And the two disciples heard him speak and they followed Jesus."

WHAT SEEK YE? (WHAT THING?)

(John 1:38)

The two disciples—one of them is the Evangelist John—set out in silence to follow the One whom the old teacher had pointed to as the "Lamb of God." It was all they could do, as they did not feel capable of opening the conversation. They needed encouragement and they received it. All those who

seek the Lord with love, shall receive the necessary encouragement. Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, "What seek ye?" While it is true that He follows the road without deviating, it is also true that He stops and interrupts His journey in order to attend to the works of mercy that the Father puts before Him. The question was brief, but the sound of that voice and his aspect led to trust. In His school we learn that one of the methods in teaching is to ask suggestive questions. "What—what thing—seek ye?" He knew that the two did not want anything except to be admitted into His presence. The question has remained as instruction to future disciples: to discover if the people are seeking "things" or Jesus Himself. The consideration leads to distinguish two classes of people: those who go to Jesus for material benefits, and those who without asking for anything, love to see, to contemplate, to follow Him. Alas! Many of those who go to Jesus for material ends do not remain, but those who are attracted by His words remain faithful until the end because they bind themselves to His great heart.

"What seek ye?" The two disciples said to Him, "Rabbi (Master) where dwellest Thou?" It was like saying to Him, "We are not seeking anything but You Yourself, and not just in passing, but in a way that we can enjoy Your presence. We are asking for the address of your dwelling." Dwelling? Fixed room? Jesus had none, not even some ecclesiastical office where He might be able to receive others at a given time. He did not give any address because an address could be lost or could be misused by some seducer who could pose as a guide. Therefore He answered, "Come and see." He did not postpone the meeting, nor did he indicate street or house, although He certainly had to live someplace. Since they were seeking Him and not things, it was necessary that they follow Him without preoccupying themselves about places. He was necessary, and not places. The way that leads to Jesus is

Jesus Himself. The two went and saw where He dwelled. The Evangelist gives not even a hint, as so many religious people would have done, about the place where He dwelled. He hastens instead to tell us that they "abode with Him that day." What did they say? Nothing is reported; but if they did not say anything, they had to hear much. That which they heard was for them, and not for recounting. Each one who sets out to follow Jesus for Jesus Himself, and has the privilege of an audience with Him—we should say in the daily language—a visit with Him, gathers in secret that which He communicates. The words "that day" are prophetic, and indicate that from that moment on, another day began, that of Grace and of Rest. The Evangelist remembers the time of the encounter. "It was about the tenth hour." It was in the morning—"Ten" is the maximum of man; the hands have ten fingers. Man finishes—the Lord begins.

However, there is no mention of the hour the visit ended. This is prophetic in that when we have met Him, after having looked on His face and admired His walk, sought Him as a Lamb, and we have told Him that we don't want "things" but Him Himself, it is clear that the encounter had a beginning but shall never have an end.

THE DECEIT OF THE REWARD OF BALAAM

(Jude 11)

“Woe unto them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.” (Jude 11). The Italian translation says “deceit” rather than “error for reward.” It was deceit—following the greediness to become rich. It is also interesting to meditate on “the way of Cain” (jealousy and hatred) and the “gainsaying—contrast—of Core” (ambition). Our meditation is on Balaam. We invite the reader to read again chapters 22 and 24 of Numbers.

Cain, Balaam, Core—all three had a religious veneer without having the reality. The first even made an offering unto the Lord; the second had a sort of a superficial faith and fear; and the third seemed zealous for the work of the Lord. But our subject is Balaam.

Of him, we know the pitiable end: he was killed while he was allied in battle with the enemies of the People of God. His story, before the king of Moab had invited, is unknown to us. He was an important person whose name had reached foreign countries. We can consider him half prophet and half fortune teller.

St. Paul, when writing about Charity, expresses a hypothesis which seems to be daring, but is not: that there can be faith without Charity. Balaam believed in God, of a believing in his own way, like that of the demons who tremble. He had a certain faith that the Lord would speak to him. He also had a hope—superficial it’s true—that he would die the death of a just man. But neither faith nor hope sufficed him, because God was not in the depths of his heart—rather there was avarice. He loved the wages of iniquity. It is written that there can be a faith—a certain believing—without Charity,

but not that there can be Charity without faith. The one who loves is led to believe, and the one who truly believes, is made perfect in Charity. To our subject:

Greediness, a desire for money, beclouded Balaam, and led him into error. What was his error? It is not difficult to know or to suppose that the people of Israel had displeased the Lord; a smart man like Balaam did not have to try too hard to assume that many had been the failings of the people of God. This was so then, and is so in every time, by which severe exhortations with vague hints to unfaithfulness are easy to come precisely to the one who has no message from Heaven. The important thing is that it is God who points out the evil and corrects it—not man. Evils there are—at least a few—and alas they exist in many. Balaam did not err in assuming that the people of Israel had committed sins, but he erred in imagining that he, caressing God by sacrifices (what language! Please pardon us,) would succeed in drawing down the wrath of God on the people. Balaam must have experienced a great delusion when, notwithstanding the great sacrifices, he was constrained to bless and not to curse. He wanted to curse, but God had not wanted to listen to Balaam. God had not wanted to listen to the intentions of accusation of an evil man. He punishes His people when, how, and by means of whom He wills, but it is a fatal error for one who dares—himself—to judge, to correct, and the like.

Avarice seduced Balaam to tempt the Lord with a new question when he had already heard an explicit “Thou shalt not go.” And later, not even the obstacles on the road caused him to repent. He smote the ass instead of beating his own breast with tears and penitence. And we—who knows how many times—have accused or beaten creatures or men, not recognizing that a cause above all causes was placing an obstacle in our path. The divine Word did not say that there was no iniquity or perversity in Israel, because there was, but

affirmed that He had not beheld it—we mean to say, that He did not want Balaam or others to be concerned about it.

Two terrible enemies ensnare Christians: Avarice and Pride.
Oh that the Lord may deliver us, and that we do not dare to sit as judges of others—not even in secret in our heart—and to imagine that God punishes because we tell Him to do so.

One who follows Jesus closely has much for which to cry for himself—that He may make him poor in the spirit, and merciful toward others.

BY ANOTHER WAY – BY THE SAME WAY

(Matthew 2:12; Isaiah 37:29; 2nd Kings 19:28)

Only animals do not change, because they move by instinct. Only those who are stubborn become obstinate and are not ready to be corrected and to confess to be in error.

The Christian is firm in his resolve to depend on Jesus Christ, but of a yielding wisdom in order to learn always, knowing that he is not perfect, that light is given him progressively, and that he is continually in the school and judgment of the Lord. An ancient proverb says, “The days follow one another, but they do not all run in the same way.” Jesus Christ is the Way but, following Him, we note that He has always something to add, to enlighten us. In the Gospels, no two events, no two miracles are absolutely identical, there being in each one of them something particular that leads to some special lesson. Abram was not supposed to remain still in one place, although firm in his aim toward Heaven. Always a pilgrim, he lived in tents. Thus the people in the

desert were to move or stop according as the cloud rested on the tabernacle or rose up.

The arrogant Sennacherib, the blasphemer who had planned to crush the pious Hezekiah and Jerusalem, had to return to his country by the same way that he had come. The Wise Men, pious souls, were warned in a dream to return to their country no longer by Jerusalem—where their investigation had created a disturbance from which proceeded the massacre of the innocent ones—but to take another road. There is always something unexpected in the life of the saint. Read Matthew 10:23. Jesus, when prevented from going through Samaria, took another way. The guidance of the Lord is renewed day by day, always vigorously. Jesus is the Way, but the methods, the experiences through which He allows us to pass are unknown, and He unfolds them to us day by day. It is enough for us to keep our eyes on Him and to follow closely in His footsteps.

LOVING CORRECTION

(Zeph. 1:12; Isaiah 14:13; Ezek. 28:15; Prov. 14:14)

“...that say in their heart (that is, not with their mouth, kept well sealed by prudence): The Lord will not do good, neither will He do evil.” Thus say those who are settled on their lees—that is, who do not like correction. Of Satan it is recorded that he said in his heart (while outwardly he must have maintained an appearance of submission): “I will exalt

my throne above the stars of God..." For this—not for anything else—he fell. This was the iniquity found in him that caused him to be expelled as a profane person (Ezekiel 28:15-18).

In Proverbs 14:14 we read that the "backslider in heart (others translate 'recanted in the heart') shall be satisfied from himself."

All this constrains one to consider an iniquity that is all inward, as however is all iniquity. Perhaps we have given exaggerated attention to many words said, who knows, lightly, and we do not discern those of a cold and correct demeanor who say holy things, but who are obstinate in their ways and speak against men and against God in their heart. They say that God cares for neither good nor evil—that is, in conclusion, they do not believe in Him. Let us be attentive, therefore, to keep a watch on our heart, and not to speak except of that which is pleasing to God.

REMEMBER... JESUS CHRIST...

(2nd Timothy 2:8)

Someone (gone with the Lord years ago) used to repeat the recommendation to read often the pastoral letters to Timothy and to Titus; we add, also the others. The first epistle to Peter is also a pastoral letter. We read, "Remember that Jesus

Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel.” (2nd Timothy 2:8).

It is an old apostle, near his sunset, who does not get tired of heaping up recommendations upon recommendations to one who was like a son in the faith: Jesus—Perfect Man—Christ—the Anointed of God—resurrected from the dead—proclaimed absolute Lord by means of the resurrection—and that He is of the seed of David. This, in substance, WAS and IS the Gospel. Remember—for yourself and in order to insist upon it to others: Jesus was crucified for our offenses, and is resurrected for our justification. Always hold on to these two truths: DEATH—RESURRECTION—and do not forget to repeat and to repeat: “From the seed of David.” You cannot appeal to the man whose heart was toward the Lord (to David) without also meditating on this important Person. We are in the greatest mystery: God made Himself man. Jesus is the root and seed of David. From Him—the Creator—came David—descended from on High to redeem—and is “seed, descendant of David.” It was on this line that Jesus reduced to silence those who continually tempted Him in words. Let us read: “While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto Him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son? And no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions.” (Matthew 22:41-46). They were boasting to know, and they hastened to say that the Christ is the son of David, meaning by this that He was an earthly prince. But to the second question of why David, also being progenitor, calls the Christ “His Lord” (Psalm 110), they could not reply. Descendant of David, and yet Lord of David—here in a few, clear words, the delineation of the

great Mystery. The incarnation of God—JESUS MAN—this is the crux of the Evangelical message. Jesus—Son of God and Son of Man—Dead—Resurrected. Remember, meditate the Man—the Mediator Man—because it is only by contemplating Him that you will be able to ask for and receive Grace to walk in His footsteps. That being occupied with power (and you must be occupied about it) does not make you forget that the glory of the Universe: God Man—with the stigmata of Calvary—is the Eternal One, at the Throne.

THE WICKED AND HIS WAY

THE UNRIGHTEOUS MAN AND HIS THOUGHTS

(Isaiah 55:7)

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” (Isaiah 55:7). The meditation is “The wicked and his way”—“The unrighteous man and his thoughts.”

According to the order, it would seem that “unrighteous” and “thoughts” are more serious than “wicked” and “way.” However, noting here as in other Scriptures, the conclusion is announced first and the process that generates it is announced afterward, it is clear that the unrighteous man becomes wicked, and his thoughts lead him to the Way—that is, to outward actions. Iniquity, the whole of the pernicious tendencies that ensnare us, refers to the secret work, often

covered by an apparent gentleness. In the message of Jesus, chapter 24 of St. Matthew, verse 12, we read: "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." "Iniquity... abound" is not a description of outward acts, rather it indicates a continuous work of astuteness by which one tries to hide his own sentiments. Now, the vibrations of the soul speak, and many times they generate suspicions and mistrust. It is undeniable that in the presence of some, one is uncomfortable, and in the presence of others—alas, few—one feels tranquil. To understand and to love is a great grace; therefore, the love of many will grow cold. Iniquity leads to hypocrisy.

We all think, but the unrighteous man caresses wicked cogitations; he closes himself in secret in a world of his own. He does not drive away sinister thoughts—rather, he cultivates them. Therefore, he becomes more and more of a hypocrite, and finally studies his own special tenor of life: his way.

The unrighteous man and the wicked ones of our text are not to be sought among outsiders. Isaiah writes of the privileged people; to them goes the command: "Let the wicked forsake..." The wicked one is portrayed in Psalm 50:16: "But unto the wicked, God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" He simulates religion, at times exaggerating. Remember the pompous phrases of Balaam when he answered the ambassadors of Moab. The truth does not have extravagant affirmations because it speaks and moves with simplicity. The wicked one recounts and recounts, with a language that wants to deceive.

Another picture: The thoughts and the ways (the methods) of the Lord are different from ours. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the

Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8, 9). They are "different" until we are "converted"—that is, decided, turned entirely to Him, as this is the sense of "converted." Our thoughts and methods assail us and tempt us but, if we are converted to the Lord, we submit to Jesus Christ for which He will give us in exchange His thoughts and His mind. (2nd Corinthians 10:4,5; Philippians 4:6, 8).

"Converted," we accept Him as "The WAY," and by remaining in His communion, little by little we become familiarized with and attracted to His Ways: "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they will be still praising thee." (Psalm 84:4).

Therefore, let us meditate the word "return" a little better. The wicked one, cunning religious fellow (forgive us the use of the word "religious")—closed in thoughts of iniquity, and who acts according to his own way, is converted; he makes an about-face to himself; he makes a decision to remain before the Lord and he will be delivered from himself—both in his mind and in his outward life. The Lord will have mercy upon him because He—God—is the GREAT FORGIVER. We have formed unions and friendships that God has not consecrated. Ask Him to unite you to His friends—and you will have neither enemies nor friends to yourself. Jesus and the Father were, and are, hated without cause. May you and I say the same—that is, that WE must not provoke enemies. And neither should you procure for yourself friends who are not His and in Him. Don't seek to win affection for yourself by artifices. Jesus is the Door. One who does not enter by the Door is a thief. Friends, enemies—only of Him, in Him.

THE HAND ON THE CENSER

LEPROSY ON THE FOREHEAD

(2nd Chronicles 26:16-21)

Uzziah was a great king who was marvelously helped and fortified by the Lord. "But..." thus continues the holy writer, "But when he was strong his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the Lord his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense." (v. 16).

This was against the order of heaven because every servant of the Lord must keep himself within the limits assigned to him. Let us read: "And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with his fourscore priests of the Lord, that were valiant men; and they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the Lord, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honor from the Lord God." (vv. 17, 18).

The words, however severe, were an announcement of mercy. If Uzziah had accepted them, not only would he have been forgiven, but he would have been blessed more than before since he—the king—was humbling himself at the warning of the priest. And it is praiseworthy that Azariah had the courage to reprove and exhort his king.

But Uzziah did not heed the warning of Heaven. Let us read: "Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense; and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up to his forehead before the priests in the

house of the Lord, from beside the incense altar. And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him and, behold, he was leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the Lord had smitten him. And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, being a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the Lord: and Jothan his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land." (verses 19-21).

Note that while he was wroth, leprosy rose up in his forehead. Reading without reflecting, the punishment seems extreme; but if we consider it, we discover the key to the event. Uzziah had in hand the perfume to be burned as incense. This was the supreme act of the ancient priest: Adoration—which assumes that there has been humbling and pardon, based on the blood of the sacrifice. The wrath of Uzziah was abominable not only in itself, but was aggravated by the fact that it manifested itself during an act of adoration. It was profanation—that is, more serious than ordinary sins, because it was committed in the same moment when the Lord was being invoked by a symbolic act. The warning of 2nd Timothy 2:19 thunders to us: "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His. And let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Depart (flee in terror)—exactly while pronouncing the Blessed Name.

INIQUITY and solemn feast together! Oh, enormous responsibility! Oh Lord, Oh Lord! Visit us and convert us to Thee—truly to Thee.

RECEIVING ALL THAT CAME IN UNTO HIM

(Acts 28:30,31)

Except for the information, even indirect, obtained from the second letter to Timothy—a letter which is (if we are permitted) his last spiritual testament—like his swan-song—sure news of the ministry of the great apostle is contained in Acts 28:30, 31. It is: “And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”

It is another type of ministry. The subject of the preaching is always Christ Jesus, the Lord; but the method is different. And different also is the order of the three names. In the past it was “Christ Jesus—Lord;” now it is “the Lord Jesus Christ.” (The revised edition on the basis of the original text has the word “Lord.”). Not much difference, one might say; and it can be accepted as such. But there is a difference in the order in which the apostle declares the Name in three names. Paul is the prisoner of Christ, not of Caesar or of other authority; but a prisoner of Him—the Lord—who, for the purpose of His Providence, had willed to imprison him and in such manner, to immobilize him.

Replete with and sustained by Grace, we must learn to look at events and men straight in the face, and to look at them without veils, not excluding certain theological and ecclesiastical veils.

There have never been any infallible servants of the Lord. What they said in the Name of the Lord, in the field of Revelation, is certain—but we cannot assume that all of their

movements were infallible. There has been only One Who did not leave one place for another unless He had finished, completed, His work for that time and place—everything always being according to the order and measure of the Father.

Let us have reverence for His servants. But let us be clear on the point that although there are pastors, teachers and various leaders, the Chief Shepherd and absolute Teacher is One alone. Let us return to Paul. His was a long and varied ministry, rich in work and in suffering. And it is difficult to decide, if at all possible for us, to compare if he served the Lord more and better when he was able to go on his missionary voyages, or when this great one who was rich in energy and good will, was impeded to travel and put in prison, since he had various more or less long imprisonments. One will say that he was imprisoned through the fault of these or those, and it is true; but at the base of his imprisonments, there is the cause behind all the causes. The Lord wanted to imprison him, and to make him, in a special way, "His prisoner."

And therefore, here he is in Rome, the goal of long aspirations. The imprisonment—at least this one, and at least for a time—was not hard. But behold that the first work of the always energetic man is an appeal to the Jews. To the Jews! The Scripture narrates—and rarely or almost never comments—but it is not forbidden to us, if guided by the Holy Spirit, to extract some lessons.

And we hazard this: The love of the apostle for his nation is praiseworthy and deserves imitation. Chapters 9, 10 and 11 to the Romans must not leave us indifferent; Paul truly loved the people of his origin, up to the point of wanting to suffer himself in order to see them in order with the Lord. But—there is a "but." If we read his testimony in Acts 22

attentively, the Lord who had read his heart, warned him: "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me." (verse 18). But the energetic man was not ready to carry out that "Make haste," and, as if to argue with the Lord, answered, "...Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on Thee: and when the blood of Thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him." (vv. 19, 20).

It is vain to reason with the Lord when he has spoken. The divine voice thundered to him more strongly with: "Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." (v. 21).

Let us admire him, this saint, in such a confession, but let us not read such passages superficially. We also, without having the virtues of that great one, are often obstinate, wanting to serve the Lord in places and groups as it seems to us. "Depart,"—the word is stronger in the text: Go—Enough—No arguments—"I will send thee far hence (!) to the Gentiles."

Part II

Consequently, we must abandon certain places and groups since we—just we—in our subtle sub-conscience, consider ourselves the most suited—perhaps the only ones suited—to reach them!

The answer is: God does not abandon them, and He will use those whom He wants, and perhaps the ones whom we least think. Besides, if we are not called to go—especially if we desire and ask for the ministry of intercession—we must pray for them and minister to them by that vast but little-known and little-longed-for ministry—the ministry in the spirit. (Colossians 1:23). Paul is in Rome—and without

delay, except for three days, he called for the chief among the Jews. There was like a conspiracy of silence around the great prisoner. They knew nothing of his sufferings, but they knew rather assuredly that "this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." These are words and behavior to reflect upon. They heard—if they even heard him—and heard him again. Some had a good impression, others did not. There was disagreement among themselves. But, like all sectarians who move by majority vote, no one accepted the message of the fellow countryman and martyr.

Result: nothing. They went away, arguing, but they went away. We would at least like to suppose that someone may have looked for him later, but no hint is given for such a charitable supposition. Nothing. Certainly, in the presence of a contrast, especially for an energetic person, energetic words are said, and Paul said them: "Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it." (v. 28). But there are reactions of discouragement in everyone, even in the strongest. We seem to hear the delicate Voice of the Comforter Who had encouraged him so many times—if we are allowed to discover it in the breath of Heaven: "Courage, oh servant of Christ: Courage; now begins another phase of your ministry." And since the Lord presents Himself like a sign from above and one from below, the sign from above was the comfort that the apostle must have received from the Holy Spirit, and the sign from below, the liberty granted to preach in prison. He was imprisoned so he could not go around: but his imprisonment did not keep him from announcing the Counsel of God.

There was some difference in his audience, which often was reduced perhaps to only one or two. They were not the persons that he—the man who was listened to—went to seek

(and that was also good in its time), but they were those whom the Lord sent to him.

Oh my brother, there is a time to go, and a time to remain firm—a time to seek and a time to receive—and how! that which God has sought, procured, and places before us. It is always He; but the methods vary from servant to servant, and also in the life of the same servant.

Encouraging our soul by the example of the man whose heart was toward God (David), we read that in an earlier time he was ordered to move against the Philistines; but the next year, against the same enemy, he was commanded not to move, but to wait to see the tops of the mulberry trees agitated by the wind (2nd Samuel 5).

Oh my brother, who knows that perhaps the cares around you will try to make you move. “You have left us. You don’t care for us... Your duty is this or that.” Certainly it is painful to say “no” even to those who are closest. But saying “no” when the “no” is needed is one of the hardest decisions. Neither you nor others will be able to justify you; but God, in His time, will justify. You—be a prisoner of Christ. Therefore, to Paul.

The audience who was not sought includes many who either do not desire to be visited, or pretend (pretend) to be interested. Friends and enemies had had the opportunity to know about Paul. Those who were willing—those who were truly moved by God—went to seek him in prison, and he “received” them—a sweet, meaningful word.

Part III Preaching – Teaching

(Acts 28:31) But another word on “receiving.” A gentle memory. An old woman, bereaved of her husband and sons, travailed by sorrow and perhaps even by remorse, wants to

be left alone, entreating her two daughters-in-law to allow her to leave, while they remained in their country. At first, one of them resists and even weeps, but then she separates herself. The other has decided to follow her. And since Naomi saw—was confirmed—that Ruth was resolved, she did not insist on the separation, but accepted her; and thus, bound together, the two poor pilgrims traveled toward and up to Bethlehem.

Ah, this is the Church! For a time the Lord—permit us the expression—seems to come after us; but then, we must seek Him—ask for Him. Note the method of Jesus with the Samaritan woman. He said to her, “Give me to drink;” but later it was the woman who said, “Lord, give me this water.”

“Preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ.” If we could have those, let us call them “sermons,” or discourses, and holy conversations, we would read something much more intimate, precise and graphic about the virtues of Him who has called us from death unto life; and we will learn to reduce the programs, and, having become contemplators of Jesus Christ—to portray His steps—how He lived—man among men—and we will understand that His Church, a little flock destined to the Kingdom—that is, the Elect—must, from station to station, arrive to that one where, in a definitive way, they consecrate Jesus as their King. The Lord is like a king in exile. The people rebel. So many religious people murmur vain things—but in Zion, God has established His King, absolute Sovereign.

This is the definitive method and message to those who love and seek the Lord. Amen.

IS A SYSTEM NECESSARY

Certainly a system is necessary; but what is a "system," and which is it that is needed? That the Lord should regard with indulgence the somewhat irregular ways is not a reason to affirm that such ways—ours—might be exactly those of Heaven. The Father expects not only that we remain in the "WAY," but that we delight in His Ways.

There are the Way and the Ways. There is the law and there are rules and statutes. There is the law of the Holy Spirit—a delicate law and more exacting than that of Sinai—and there are the particular ways—the steps, the footsteps left by the Son of Man so that we, in His Light, walk like He did.

In the Kingdom of the Spirit, there is the System, and it is great. And, the first admonition of this system is that we must not have systems. Oh, I remember the holy words of a servant of Jesus Christ, words which I must study more and more to understand and live them. He said: "The Lord has told us that we—WE—must not resolve anything, but that He should guide us according to the occasions." And that means that we must remain in the present light and conditions until the Lord indicates further steps. The light discovers afar, but it is also close (Psalm 119:105).

There is the system, but it is from Above. When that great disturbance recorded in Acts 15 arose, the need for a Council was felt, and there was one. Then the Council was dissolved and no Presidents, secretaries or any other officers were elected. The Church is a stranger in the world, and not of the world (of the spirit of the world). There have been tares and disturbances in every age, such as people like Diotrephes and Alexander the coppersmith. But the one who is of God listens to His VOICE. He governs from Above by means of

special ministries that are not made by man or according to man—ministries not recognized by all. (Jesus and the Apostles were known by only a few.) (Ephesians 4:11-13).

Serious necessities arose, and well-meaning people decided to arrange things, etc. Thus were the systems born (the various sects!) Now I ask you, oh brother who speaks of systems: Which one do you recommend? There are many, and you know it... the Roman, the Greek, or whose? But God has His system; the same one by which the shepherds of Bethlehem, the Wise Men, Simeon, and Anna saw the Baby Jesus; the same one that united pious souls at the foot of the cross for the pious work.

A system? The Wise Men had it: the guidance of the star; but at the gate of Jerusalem they thought they had arrived to the end of the voyage. They disturbed and were disturbed. And outside of Jerusalem they saw the star again. God has His system. The Holy Spirit unites those who fear the Lord and think upon His Name. How much there is in that Blessed Name (Malachi 3:13 etc.).

Committee of elders? Where; what Committee? A group of elders of a church laid hands on Timothy. Behold the Committee. Every church has its elders. "Let him call for the elders of the church." That is, the sick one calls the elders of the congregation to which he belongs.

It is necessary to meditate on the Scriptures—but what is meant by "the sons of the prophets" of the times of Samuel, Elijah and Elisha? They were groups of pious souls gathered in small villages. And yet, what relationship does this have with the New Testament where we learn that we cannot put the salt where we want, but it must be liquefied and disappear from sight before being useful? There are and have been persecutions. And the Lord has anticipated—Matthew 10:23. Do not fight, do not protect yourself; if it is necessary,

go, oh pilgrim, fleeing from city to city until the Lord comes and, if not a final coming, He comes to gather you in. Oh my brother, let us not judge anyone, because many are in good faith and have holy intentions. But you—decide: Cry to whom? To God—and He will not leave you alone. Joshua asked whom the people wanted to serve—because there were the gods of Mesopotamia, those of Egypt and of Canaan—and there was—there is—the Lord.

And you—what system, what creed do you want to be part of? There are various. Oh, answer and cry with me: “I want the Lord—His Way—His Ways! AMEN.

BECAUSE YE ASK NOT

(James 4:2, 3)

“Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.” (James 4:2,3). Someone translates: “You do not ask in reality.” And, “You do not ask in the authority of the Spirit by which one is sure to receive.” The image is of one who, furnished with a valid document, goes to draw money from a bank; his behavior is respectful but not uncertain. An example will clarify about an “asking” which is NOT an asking. In chapter 28 of 1st Samuel we read: “And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor

by prophets. Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her. And his servant said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.” (vv. 6,7) Saul asked the Lord, not others, but the Lord. He had no answer in any way. Therefore, he went to the witch at Endor. But in 1st Chronicles 10:13 and 14 we read: “So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it. And inquired not of the Lord: therefore He slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.” Take note of the words “And inquired not of the Lord,” referring to his having turned to the witch. 1st Samuel refers to the external act of asking; 1st Chronicles 10:14 reveals that Saul had not really asked—that is, like one who is expecting an answer, insisting. That is to say that he had not asked “with all his heart,” and the Lord, although apparently indifferent, then would have allowed Himself to be found. There comes to mind the prayer of an ancient saint who for a time had asked the Lord to deliver him from a certain condition—that is, he was asking to be delivered, but without saying it, there was a “Not yet,” in the depth of his soul.

Permit us a not impossible affirmation about Saul: “I have asked—and I have no answer; therefore I must help myself as best as I can.” The verdict of the One who weighs the spirits is: “Saul did NOT inquire.” Therefore the ruin, which began years before, had a final epilogue: his suicide.

Another example, as illustration. Esau cried asking for the blessing; he really wanted it. But for what reason? The reason is not given, but if we remember that he—profane—had despised his birthright and sold it for a pottage of lentils—the birthright was a supreme type of election in that time—it is easy to understand that the blessing would have

meant nothing. His asking was not for the glory of God. The blessing, although sought with tears, truly sought, would not have confirmed that which did not exist: the despised birthright, and for which contempt the profane one had never cried. We have often erred, not distinguishing asking from asking, and the reason for asking.

There is only one asking that reaches the Throne: that in the Name of Jesus—that is, that He, by the Holy Spirit, asks in us, and that it is for one reason only—wanting to live according to the will of God.

FATHER, I THANK THEE THAT THOU HAST HEARD
ME

(St. John 11:41, 42)

It was a pleasant surprise for me when I heard, for the first time, that someone instead of saying “Please give me...,” when there was no doubt of obtaining it, instead of asking, said: “Thank you for...” And he indicated the object. It seems strange that instead of asking, one thanks, considering the request to be superfluous because he is sure of receiving.

Jesus—the Man of Prayer. It is a vast and glorious theme, as however, is all that refers to Him. Praying at all times synthesizes all of the life of the saint, assuming coming, abiding, in Jesus; praying, making supplications, requesting, thanking, interceding. We will stop at “requesting.” The idea

is of someone who holds a valid document in his hands; that he is the one who is identified as the legitimate possessor of the document; and that he presents it and asks for its fulfillment in the manner and time prescribed.

Let us take the example of one who wishes to cash a check. It is necessary that the check be made out according to regulations, and by someone who has the right to do so; that it be presented by the one to whom it was made out, and in the Office, at the time and in the manner regulated by the Office itself (a bank, a post office, for example). Lacking one of the three requisites, there is no payment.

If it is lawful for us, it is necessary that we have the right and use the proper method to make it valid—the procedure.

At the throne of God, Jesus has an inexhaustible deposit, by which there is no danger that the requests made to Him, or in His Name will not be answered. It is indispensable that the petitioner be authorized by Him to ask, and that he present himself according to the rules of the Sanctuary. There is only One who can give us the authority to present ourselves in the Name of Jesus, and it is the Holy Spirit. Read Ephesians 2:18: "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." There are three in said words: The Spirit who prepares—the Way by which the Request goes up, the New and Living Way in the Blood of Jesus Christ—and the Father who grants.

Whereas there are prayers and supplications conditioned by "If Thou wilt," there are cases where the request is on that which assuredly is according to the will of God. For example, it is not the case to say, "Lord, let me live according to Thy Will, if Thou wilt." Let the reader multiply the examples for which there is no doubt about the will of God. That which refers to Life (the true one) and to Godliness is implicit in the Will of God. St. John, in the first

epistle 5:14 and 15 says, "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: And if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petition desired of Him."

Now we can better understand the conduct of Jesus at the sepulcher of Lazarus. Let us read St. John 11:41 and 42. The request is not expressed, but is tenderly implicit in the act of giving thanks. Jesus added that He was saying it for the sake of the bystanders—for their instruction. Jesus' prayers were—are—always heard. He has wished to inform us of it not only by teaching, but by a practical act. In a case impossible according to man, after having affirmed that if one believes, he will see the glory of God, He thanked the Father and then called Lazarus... "If thou believe," in the delicate and exact language of the text is, "If thou wouldst believe..." --are disposed to believe—"Thou wouldst see the glory of God."

But let us limit ourselves: We ask, having been authorized and possessing a sure document to be presented in the time and manner of the One who must carry it out. There are times and manners and conditions in the relationships with Heaven. There are rules before men, and one should not assume that we can act with presumption before God. The Christian, if he is such, is always before the Lord—but, case by case, he sighs and asks that he be prepared by the Holy Spirit as to the when and how. And thus, immersed in the Spirit that renews and stamps the Name in him, thus—the true worshipper prostrates himself wholeheartedly before God and asks—thanking—in the Name—in that Name.

MORE DEEDS THAN WORDS

HE BEGAN FIRST TO DO, THEN TO SAY. God takes pleasure not in many words, but in the reality of our consecration to Him. When the Lord Jesus sent the disciples, He gave them these commandments: "And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give." They were more deeds than words.

The answer that Jesus sent to John the Baptist was: "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." The words of announcement were last—preceded by a volume of works of charity.

The last proof, of whether or not we have truly loved Him, will not be by the words we have said, but by that which we have done in His Name: "For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in; naked and ye clothed me; I was sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me."

And the righteous shall answer Him: "Lord when?" "And the King shall answer unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

That rich man who ran to Jesus addressing Him with beautiful words, was found lacking when the practical walk of love toward others in the Name of Jesus was pointed out to him. It is one of the psychological truths that every emotion that is not translated into practice, but is spent in words, terminates by drying up and falsifying the heart.

Many exchange beautiful words for things. St. James calls a man vain (empty) who boasts that he believes but does not have works. He describes thus the man of beautiful words without works: "If a brother or a sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding, ye give him not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?"

The early Church was generous and ready, accompanied by a sober and lively speaking. The word of one who lives the life of the Gospel has the imprint of Reality. Jesus had the most powerful Word because He had the life most filled with the love of God.

"And out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword." (Revelation 1:16). Afterward, in the churches, began the theological discussions, and the use of beautiful phrases in place of reality. Words began to be exchanged for things; and in general, the Church has given a sad spectacle of unreality.

The last days of the Church will see a rising and spreading of a people who returns to the reality of God; who will always more be using a modest and sober language and who will be ready to give their life for others, after the example of Jesus Christ who spoke as no other man spoke, because He lived and worked as no one had ever done. The one who saw Him, saw God. Without speaking, He was the Word of God. His words were not phrases, but they brought life and the reality of the Creator.

LIKE AS WHEN SHE WAS BROUGHT UP WITH HIM

(Esther 2:20)

We have often been embittered because we have been disillusioned regarding young or newly converted people who at first seemed to be humble and submissive. And it is fair to add that we too have caused pain to others, they too being disillusioned with regard to us. At times we have sensed a praiseworthy future, but have wanted to hasten it ourselves, not knowing that between the revelation and the fulfillment of it, there is the time of God. Wait.

People who remain always humble and submissive, whatever the circumstances may be, are rare indeed. Two, among other persons—rather, three—are worthy of mention. There are others. David returned to the sheep after having been anointed king, and after the victory over the giant. Nor did he push himself into the kingship after the death of Saul, but waited for the approval of the Elders of the people. And after the death of Absalom, he did not return immediately to Jerusalem—rather, he waited for the invitation of the tribes.

Elisha did not keep the mantle, but put it back on the shoulders of Elijah, and was a servant to him for many years; and not even after his rapture, after he had gathered the important mantle, did he begin to act as though he were now independent, but at the Jordan he invoked the God of Elijah. Samuel, as a young boy, was submissive, humble and devout.

But in the present meditation we will say a few words about a young girl, beautiful of soul and of body—Esther. It has been noted that in the book that goes by her name, the name of God is not mentioned even one time, but that His finger and His Providence are evident in all of the narrative. Esther, a little Jewish orphan, was adopted by her old cousin,

Mordecai. Selected from among those who had to be presented to the king, she never asked those who were appointed to prepare her for the high post, for anything. Toward Mordecai, she kept the same demeanor of humility and of obedience. Let us read Esther 2:20: "Esther had not yet showed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her; for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him,"

Later when she was requested to take a bold step that could cost her life, she, the queen, accepted humbly the reprimand, the exhortation and the command of Mordecai. Let us read Esther 4:12-16. Oh holy young girl, how much everyone has to learn from you—the young people, elders, and also (and perhaps more) we old people!

Her behavior after she found favor with the king is also worthy of admirable imitation. She asked: "Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favor in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition and my people at my request." (Esther 7:3). Prophetic words are these—they reveal an absence of presumption, which confess that it is not enough to have received Grace, but we must implore for "Life," and only thus can we intercede for others.

Now we are in a position to understand better and to feel the exhortations written between the tears of an old apostle to his disciple—to Timothy.

From this to the maximum portrait, to the humiliation of Jesus—constant humiliation and obedience, until the end. He bowed His head and gave up the ghost.

SEPARATED—THEY HAVE SEPARATED—THEY
SEPARATED

What is meant by such words, often citing scriptural verses without reason? Who are those who are separated; for what purpose? An example, and it is the highest one that we can present: In the second chapter of St. Luke we read that two saints left Jerusalem after the feast, and did not verify if the twelve-year-old child were in their company. Each traveling in his group, although the groups followed each other, each of the two saints imagined that Jesus was in the other group; whereas He was with neither of the two groups, having remained in Jerusalem—rather, in the Temple—by guidance of the Father. Those two blessed ones made the painful discovery at the end of the day (no less!), and after having sought in vain, they had to “separate themselves” from the multitude and return painfully to Jerusalem to seek and to seek. It is strange that only by the third day they resolved to seek Him in the Temple to see if, who knows, He might be there; and yet the Temple was the place from which they had left. Strange, but instructive, because often, wandering, we seek (it is true), but not where—or not immediately where—Jesus can be found. The lament and veiled reprimand of the Mother—of that Mother—and the answer to TWO questions of the unique Twelve-year-old, invite us to reverent meditation. The two saints—Joseph and Mary—were determined in a firm assurance that the Child should not have separated Himself. The question of Jesus, with the “How is it?” to two errors warns that there is something much more important than human concourse—at least on that occasion—and that then He must be sought where we have left Him—we have left Him.

Do you remember, or have you been informed how God promoted this glorious Movement in order to lead us to Him, by means of the Holy Spirit, and in order to be always

(always) under the guidance of the glorious Spirit, because He alone portrays Jesus Christ. Meditate before passing judgment against innocent ones—who, although alone, they desire to live for One alone, and walk after the footsteps of the Son of Man.

Who are the separated and the separated? The Holy Spirit will tell you. Let us return to the Temple of adoration.

PRAYER AT THREE TIMES

(Psalm 55:17; Daniel 6:10)

A certain spiritual discernment is necessary because general affirmations disappear. We must be precise and specific. Pray at all times; love everyone; all belongs to the Lord. This ALL—for many is synonymous with nothing. O man, discipline your time, your means; love even your enemies, mentioning them by name on your knees at the Throne of Grace.

The Prayer—the Psalmist (Psalm 55:17) informs us: “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice.”

The morning—start the day in prayer. At noon, pray for continued help. In the evening, give an account of the day with penitence and thanksgiving. And do this—day after day. Daniel—when the edict was published as recorded in

chapter six of the book—did not change his program. Let us read Daniel 6:10: “Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.”

But someone may ask us if the fixing of certain habits in prayer—and, let’s even say it, in the use of money—is according to the Law of the Spirit.

We answer that until one says—and truly feels it—that all is of the Lord, and therefore uses every cent as having to give account, much is needed. Until one becomes PRAYER, as written in Psalm 109:4 (without reading the words in italics), much is needed.

From time to time, some rare saint appears who has no need to have special prayer times; he prays always. He has no need to fix portions for the Lord, because TRULY (TRULY) he has consecrated ALL to Him.

THE KEY IS IN YOUR HAND

(Proverbs 12:14; 15:23)

I must confess that many times I have had to be ashamed of myself for having spoken or answered hastily when moved by poor impressions, memories and resentments. The temptation to anger is not sin, but it is sin to act, to speak,

while the anger wants to dominate us. The sun—Jesus Christ—dissipates it, if we look to Him. Elisha did not have an easy temperament, because holy energies are often close to and intermixed with human energies. Elisha spoke harshly to the King of Israel, but became aware that, agitated as he was, he could not hear the soft and gentle Voice, and therefore prophesy. He asked for a musician, and while the musician was playing, Elisha heard the message of Heaven.

I remember, many years ago: a brother came near me and spoke to me defending someone for whom I had prayed at length; and then I had become tired because it seemed to me that that certain individual had worsened. Harsh words were about to come to my mouth, as if to say, "Don't speak TO ME (Oh, the pride of that 'To me!') of that certain individual because if there has been one who has excused him and prayed for him, it was precisely I"—(the terrible I)! But the blessed Lord did not permit the river of resentment to come out—He touched my heart—I heard something else, and I spoke in a different way. Oh, reader, the one who writes has erred much, and he speaks the truth. As best as I can remember, I answered in this manner: "Oh my brother, I am happy that you are interested in the good of ...; that you excuse him; note the good, and pray. I too have seen the good, and have prayed at length. Then—for some time since a certain event and information, I have no longer prayed. But who am I? The Lord has taken the burden from me and has placed it on you to intercede. I am happy, because in ... there is much good, and the errors will certainly not remain. The Lord works thus: He allows us to work in a field, with some individuals, and then He uses others for the same purpose. Charity and patience are limited in us." I said more, in a conversation that was tender and edifying.

While I was speaking, I was infused by a peace and sweetness rarely experienced, and heard in me the words of

the text. Man receives blessings from his own mouth. The verses that I cited, I did not remember at all; perhaps I had never read them with interest (Oh, we read in haste!). I looked for them—and I bless the Lord for them.

Oh my brother, the key of your future is in yourself: in your heart, in your mouth, in your hand. The self reacts in each one of us. The heart and the mouth regulate the hand—the working. Great and blessed Lord who has placed Judge and Court of Justice in each one of us. Seek Him: He is in yourself. The evil currents assail you, but turn to Him and hear Him. Goodness to you—kindness to others will accompany you continually.

IN THE LAST DAY...

(John 7:37-39)

“In the last day...Jesus stood and cried...” (John 7:37-39). Oh charity and wisdom of Jesus help us, because there are many ways to examine Thy words.

Our reference to St. John 7:37 is for the purpose of portraying Jesus as One who is waiting for the preliminaries to come to an end so that the souls might definitively go to Him. The feasts were necessary—they had been ordered by God Himself, as likewise the Temple was necessary. Jesus was no stranger in the Temple, but He was waiting for the souls to come to Him. Let us also learn to wait, for it is a

mistake to force others to accept truths that we have reached only after many years—and never perfectly. We, too, have enjoyed many preliminaries which, while they no longer interest us, were once of edification and perhaps, without those things, who knows where we would have gone. But there is a time when, from the means, one arrives to the end—from the promises to the final one: to partake of the nature of God (2nd Peter 1:3, 4), from the blessings to the Blessed One, a time that the Lord knows for each one of us. And then, either one goes definitively to Him, or He withdraws Himself. The time came when Jesus pronounced sentence against the Temple which had become a den of thieves instead of being a House of Prayer (Matthew 21:3). He forsook the Temple, never to return again. But now we stay on the side of hope—in the last day.

It was the last great feast of the year—the last year of five—three of which required the attendance of the people in Jerusalem. The three were: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. The last one lasted eight days, commemorating the pilgrimage of the children of Israel through the wilderness and the Rock which had given them water, and had followed them. The symbolic figures are necessary and useful if from them we go on to the substance—Reality. While it is true that by virtue of the Christian dispensation we are by faith in the realm of Grace and Truth (Substance—Permanence—Reality), even Christians are led through a preparatory process—from the blessings to the Blessed One—from their own works to Rest—from the feasts to the only Feast, the eternal Sabbath of union with Jesus.

The Lord is patient; let us ask Him to make us patient—of His patience (Revelation 3:10). Many times the gentle voice of the Holy Spirit has admonished me, saying, “Do not discourage others from many things in which you yourself have been edified. God has waited for you; learn to excuse

and wait for others.” But alas, what am I saying! Lord, forgive me for there are many who can be examples and teachers to me. They must excuse and wait for me.

So, it was the last day—one day after the other—each day was important and solemn. Jesus had been in the Temple and no doubt He enjoyed the crowd and the ceremonies—He, the Great One, who had humbled himself and who had honored and fulfilled all of the Old Covenant. With the close of the feast, another year and another feast began—eternal year and eternal feast.

We discover the true needs of the soul and spirit through necessary experiences. Feast after feast—but the soul, hungry for that which is Invisible, was becoming more hungry and thirsty as a result of the feasts themselves. Jesus knew this; therefore He made His appeal to those who were still hungry and thirsty.

Jesus stood up. This posture is instructive for it indicates decision—an authoritative, conclusive visit. He cried out. He was not used to raising His voice; as a rule, His language was as we read in St. Matthew 12:18, 19: “Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets.”

His words are always important; but sometimes, standing up, He cried out—He cries out still. Pay attention when He stands up and cries out—a majestic crying out. It is your crisis—either you go downward, or you go toward Heaven. Let it be toward Heaven.

And He said, “IF any man...” appealing to each individual, excluding no one—“thirst, let him COME...”—let him move, separating himself from things and people around

him—"let him come unto ME and drink." Be still—an inner silence—and drink. It is a new beginning. AMEN.

TODAY – TOMORROW – THE DAY AFTER
TOMORROW

(Luke 13:35; Revelation 3:8)

They were able neither to speed Him up nor to slow Him down. The relatives who did not believe in Him, insinuated in a sarcastic language that He should go to Jerusalem, since they assumed that He who was staying in a distant, unsophisticated territory such as Galilee, would have found opponents in Jerusalem who were able to unmask Him. To them, Jesus answered that His time had not yet come; whereas, man's time is always hasty. Read St. John 7:1-9. Let us meditate, because by means of the Holy Spirit we will see and understand the opposite picture—God and man.

"After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand. His brethren therefore said unto Him, Depart thence and go into Judaea, that Thy disciples also may see Thy works that Thou doest. For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world." "For neither did His brethren believe in Him. Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come; but your time is always ready. The world cannot

hate you but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up into this feast; for my time is not yet full come. When He had said these words unto them, He abode still in Galilee.”

Let us read Luke 13:31-35 for another instance: “The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto Him, Get Thee out and depart hence; for Herod will kill Thee. And He said unto them, Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures today and tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate; and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

It is not necessary to say that the Pharisees did not intend to protect Jesus. They were foxes—servants of a big fox. Jesus did not have to leave yet; other duties were keeping Him in that place. Three symbolic days were necessary for Him: Today—the present; tomorrow—the immediate effect; and the day after tomorrow—the confirmation. And meanwhile “He would walk” in his calm way of proceeding—He who never hurried and never wasted time. He would go, yes, to Jerusalem, fully knowing that there He would be killed, because Jerusalem (the earthly one—not that from Above which is MOTHER) is the place of martyrdom of the prophets. And after the answer to the gratuitous and insidious counselors, His great heart erupted in the exclamation of pain and intense love toward the homicidal city—“Jerusalem, Jerusalem...” We turn our eyes from Him to His Church. Read Revelation 3:7, 8: “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith He that

is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth; I know thy works; behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name." The open Door is before us; Jesus is the Door, and He, from time to time, offers opportunities and opens the way. Let us follow Him more closely. He promises victory and encourages that no man can close the door that He puts before us. Although man has but a little strength (the strongest among us has only a little strength, in the measure of Heaven), with that little strength, he has kept His word (Jesus spoke—speaks), and has not denied His Name (His character as a whole). The three affirmations imply three attempts by the enemy. Many try to close the door but they CANNOT do so; the Word of Jesus must be listened to attentively, and must be kept sacred in our hearts; and He must be seen in us in the midst of much distraction, discouragement, and persecution. Can anyone close that door to one who has truly placed himself in His hands? Impossible—because before that door which is He Himself, He has placed Himself as a guardian—and no one can enter, except by trampling on Him. Can anyone close that door to stop the slaves of Jesus before their time, when they, one by one, must accomplish that which has been assigned to them before finishing their course?

We have heard—and we are witnesses of it: Many years ago, a certain individual, confused by strange reports, sent a message best left unqualified, to a brother who, through sacrifices and in weakness, tried to serve the Lord. Among other words, there were these: "If the Lord has called you, fine; if not, you will stop; He will stop you." The emphasis was on the second "If." But he was stopped, because he died that very same year, and the one who received the letter and

did not resent it, lived a long time, and we know him—and more than before, he is still in the service of Jesus Christ.

Oh my brother, guard against placing a hand against the anointed of the Lord, even should he fall short—and who does not fall short! Remember Aaron and Miriam who murmured against Moses, although it was true that Moses had married an Ethiopian woman (Numbers 12). Rather, we must judge no one, even if we discern something to judge. Pray, we must. And this, not only with regard to those anointed from Above, but with regard to all men, because all are His creatures and therefore, we must love and pray. But, since words are empty, it is necessary that we be made “New Creatures—New Creation.”

The Door cannot be closed for the Remnant—nor can the various opportunities that He continues to open to us be closed. The Remnant who are close to Him receive and store His Word with a diligent love. Consequently, in the midst of so many who tempt or press them to vacillate, and perhaps even to deny the Name, they do not deny It, but have sealed the Name in their hearts to love Him, and on their arms to serve Him. They have engraved It, perhaps without being aware of it, on their foreheads, in all their aspect and conduct, and proclaim Him, at times without opening their mouths.

We are His and we live for Him Who has bought us with the price of Blood.

NOT OF PRIVATE INTERPRETATION

(2nd Peter 1:20, 21)

NOTE: Reader, pray that the Lord will make and keep you impartial, and read in the Spirit of Jesus Christ; if not, imprisoned in some partiality, you will not succeed in seeing the True One and the TRUTH as a whole.

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” (2nd Peter 1:20, 21).

Our theme is: “Not of Private Interpretation.” Literally: “It is not (does not become) a solution in itself.” It is not of a human origin, because men of God have spoken—proclaimed it as if transported—infused with the Holy Spirit.

A reflection: There were not lacking—and are not lacking—slaves of Jesus Christ who, moved to uplift Him, have discovered and discover that one of the greatest obstacles to the ministry is to evangelize and to teach those who have closed themselves in some particular views, ignoring, or what is even more painful, condemning others... We are all more or less superficial and incomplete; that’s why we need one another. That’s why the knowledge of God is revealed to the “saints” in the communion of the saints (Ephesians 3:18). And you, oh reader, if you have been brought by Grace to see the whole of the Counsel of God, don’t be puffed up, because even you—if not now, at some other time—have been obstinate and have closed yourself in partial views.

Oh how difficult it is and a cause for misunderstandings and persecutions, to see men as a whole and not only in the particulars. God judges the whole—the conclusion. Wanting to reprove the pious Jehoshaphat for his alliance with Ahab

and descendants, He remembered that even in Jehoshaphat there were praiseworthy deeds.

The difficulties of the evangelical preaching today are more serious and more numerous than in the first apostolic times. Then, the opposition—although varied—came from Paganism and Judaism. Afterward, to those same oppositions, broken up under many names, are added those of the various groups of Christianity, each of which has excellent points but, in general, (there are encouraging exceptions) they give emphasis—alas disproportionately—to one truth, obscuring the others. Our mind, except if submitted to Grace, is capable of few ideas and resolutions. Only those who distrust themselves and keep their eye and their heart toward Jesus Christ, are brought to hear and to learn from everyone and from everything (1st Cor. 3:21-23).

Be it far from us who are more needy than many, to wish to offend anyone. It is with regret that we note (oh, that we were in error!) that almost wherever we move among Christians—and we say among those who are sincere—we note that almost all are fixed on one point that absorbs or hides the others.

Pious souls will tell us: A supreme Head is needed who represents Jesus, and will insist upon Peter or upon someone else. Another, remembering Faith and Justification, will insist upon those. Another, on works. Another is closed in a single message: "Holiness," and without wanting to, he points to himself as an example; and another will ask you if you have spoken tongues and will repeat to (Lord forgive me)...will repeat to you: "Holy Spirit," forgetting that the Holy Spirit was promised and given to uplift Jesus Christ. Someone else—alas, I fear that they are among the most obstinate—showing us the precious book, will say to us that he adheres to this: "That which is written," and he forgets

that not only is there the written word, but there is the way to read it (Luke 10:26). And not only this, but the Wise Teacher gives food at the right time and in the right measure (Luke 12:42; Psalm 145:15). There is more. Many pretend to find everything in the letter; whereas, much of it gives only a few hints which the Holy Spirit will go on illuminating and extending. In addition, the first proclaimers of the Gospel did not begin by selecting texts and by commenting on them, but they presented facts and were led by the Holy Spirit to confirm them also with the witness of the Scriptures. Let us read: "And to this the Scriptures agree." The facts often made them remember the Scriptures (Example: John 2:17-22).

Alas, often we are disturbed by some who, with book in hand, repeat a quantity of verses, selected among those that back up their argument; they repeat and insist while, because of heated discussions, their heart is agitated and their mind is confused. And often it turns out to be a sort of conflict as to who argues most and multiplies biblical quotations. This great book—a precious one—that some have read many times, in many languages, stopping to cry and to sigh—this unique book has become a pretext for war. But no more than that.

You, reader, do you truly love Jesus Christ, Lord (your Master!)? Do you truly want to be under the control of the Holy Spirit? Have faith that the Holy Spirit will guide you in all truth—that is according to that which you, in Grace can bear; and He will go on giving you witnesses, among them principally the Scripture, pointing out the proper passages to you each time.

It is true that we have inherited much of good, but also much that is exaggerated and perhaps, in part, erroneous. Don't submit to burdens that are not those destined to you. Walk

slowly and at a walking pace. Watch the footsteps of Jesus Christ, the Man-God. Do not fear—the Holy Spirit will rejoice in you, and through you. Place yourself through the spirit into the Communion with all the saints, of every place and time. You are not alone, and by yourself you cannot understand. Jesus is reflected in many mirrors. Contemplate Him reflected wherever it is given to you. Little by little, without seeing it yourself, you will become like Him.

Always be a consciously penitent and sorrowful man, but be confident and serene; and without your seeing it yourself, you will become just and more just—holy and more holy. AMEN—AMEN.

THREE UNCLEAN SPIRITS LIKE FROGS

(Revelation 16:13-16)

Let us read Revelation 16:13 & 14: “And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”

From the mouth of the three, come out three unclean spirits—that is, they become active in a supreme effort to fight against the Lamb and His people. They are qualified as

“frogs.” It is not the form—rather, we imagine that they even assumed imposing and elegant aspects. Frogs—the figure is very eloquent. Frogs abound and croak where the water does not run but forms puddles. (Ezekiel 47:11).

Frogs are amphibious, able to live in water and out of water. They can swim and jump with ease. They are symbols. They are symbol of someone who is suspicious, who knows how to play several parts in a comedy, passing at times from one extreme to the other, who is deceitful and equivocal. Such a person tries to make everybody happy. Absalom, the elegant prince, told everyone that they were right, and made a great following for himself by which he intended to dethrone his father.

The dragon, the beast and the false prophets prefer to move cautiously and to use others. The three unclean sprits perform miracles, and at times such miracles—if it were possible—would seduce the elect. That’s not to say that they do not succeed to disturb and to confound even the saints for a time but those who truly live in Christ are not seduced. Perplexed and confused for a time, they are then illumined and delivered.

At this point, the Holy Spirit suspends the narrative and opens a parenthesis: It’s a warning and an encouragement. Let us read verse 15: “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.” Be careful, oh Christians. The dangers are great, but greater is the help, if we trust in the Lord. But above all, “BE CAREFUL;” because in the hour that we think not, shall the coming of the Son of Man be—whether it happens for everyone, or individually for each one of us. Blessed is the one who does not fear what he suffers or will suffer, because even if he suffers, he is destined for a happy ending. Let us exhort ourselves while

we have time, not to be seduced by amphibious, equivocal spirits; but to be faithful unto death, whether it comes in a natural way or in a violent way. They—the unclean spirits—are influential, and they gather many people. “And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue ARMAGEDDON.” Alas, many are occupied to study and to describe signs and persons, at times fantastic, instead of paying attention to that which is essential. That is, we must trust in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. We must have communion with Him at the Throne in order to watch ourselves and to be watched by Him from deceit and seductions that present themselves in a subtle and fascinating way. Oh, that we should love the Truth, and live in Jesus Christ, and then let the frogs—the amphibians—move as swiftly and as deceitfully as they will. We belong to Christ.

ENDS OF THE EARTH AND THE SHAKING OUT OF
THE WICKED

(Job 38:12, 13; Psalm 5:5, 6, 16)

How many preachers! And what a scarcity of true preachers! Let us read Job 38:12 & 13, part of the divine message to Job, after the holy man heard and was in contradiction with his three friends, with words that were a mixture of light and darkness, and after the true messenger Elihu spoke, reducing him to silence, in order to hear directly from God alone. This is part of what God said: “Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dawn to know his

place (New Amer. Std. Bible); that it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it?"

Morning and dawn are prophetic words. It was at dawn—just when the special star was about to be visible—that the trembling Jacob stopped fighting (reasoning), asked to be blessed, and had his name changed (Genesis 32). And it is in the morning, after a night of anguish, that there is joy—double joy (jubilation—Psalm 30:5). And it is when morning dawns (New Amer. Standard Bible) that the Lord helps His Church (Psalm 46:5). Likewise, it was at daybreak that an unfortunate woman became aware that in the night her child had been robbed from her and substituted by the other child who was dead. There shall be one last “dawn” and one last “morning,” without evening; but in the meantime, night and day, evening, dawn and morning alternate and follow each other in the Church and in the life of every Christian.

Let us go back to our theme in Job 38:12, 13. In the measure that light spreads, darkness disappears. There is no force in the visible world that can succeed in dispersing darkness from the night except for the rising of the sun. Thus it is in our soul and in the Church.

Read Psalm 68:1: “Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered; let them also that hate Him flee before Him.” When the Lord reaches the extremes—extreme cases that appear desperate—and comes down to examine conflicts and confusions (when He truly arrives, and in a decisive way), the wicked are SCATTERED. It does not say that they are converted (oh, that God may convert them!) or that they stop being wicked, but that they are scattered—they disappear.

Who are the wicked? The answer may be read in Psalm 50:16: “But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?” They have the name of God in their

mouth, and not in their heart. They are scattered. Such individuals are numerous and they move in agreement just to confound and damage those who are sincere. They scatter where a visit of heaven reaches extremes, in order to appear elsewhere. Far be it from us to judge. We write objectively and with trembling. But unfortunately you, oh reader, may have noticed how many arrive uninvited where a true ministry from Above is lacking—and how they are scattered to cast a gloom over other places when a true servant of God should arrive. Visit us, oh Lord, and deliver us from ourselves and from others!

THE RICH MAN AND THE POOR MAN

(Prov. 13:8)

Let us read Proverbs 13:8: "The ransom of a man's life are his riches; but the poor heareth not rebuke." The rich and the poor are mentioned often in the book of Proverbs. In our text, the man of the earth leans on riches for the ransom of his very life—and by riches, we mean not only material goods, but also the various resources of one's ability.

There is another who has nothing on which to depend because he is poor, and he fights with silence; rather, he does not hear, does not want to hear, any rebuke (threat). He defends himself by closing his ears and not opening his mouth. Whatever others say, whatever may be plotted against him, he withstands it with a meek and humble

silence. It is the portrait of the saint of the beatitudes who, having become poor in spirit, he is meek, he mourns, and advancing from beatitude to beatitude, finally he becomes a man of peace and a bearer of peace, a true son of God in the image of the Only Begotten Son. And as He was, so he too shall be a target for slander and persecutions. To such an individual is addressed the exhortation and promise that he should rejoice and be happy, because the prophets and the Prince of the prophets were likewise persecuted. "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." (Psalm 89:15).

Blessed is he who is rich in God but is poor in himself. Although well-intentioned and striving to do his best, depending on Grace, he knows that he cannot build any tower. Against the enemies and adversaries, he knows he cannot fight; **IN ORDER TO FIGHT, HE WOULD HAVE TO IMITATE THEM, AND IMITATING THEM, HE WOULD CEASE TO IMITATE THE GREAT MARTYR.** Therefore, he does not hear—consequently, he does not speak. He commits himself like Jesus to the One who judges righteously. He learns from his enemies, because if they say something of which he has need, he profits by it to humble and to correct himself. If they slander him, it is also acceptable to God and to men, because the occasion is given to him to pray and to bless. Yes, to bless—that is, to say a word of praise, revealing some little bit of good that there may be in the most obstinate adversary. It is the language of the text: To bless means to speak well of someone, to eulogize. It is strange. Someone throws mud at you, and you excuse him because he is tempted; and you add that you have seen in him, if not much, at least a little bit of good. Oh, life of Jesus Christ! When will we become like You, oh Lord! "Don't you hear anything," exclaimed Pilate marveling at the serene conduct of the Innocent One... "How many things they are saying against you!" But He kept silent! In the

measurement and value of heaven, the deluded rich man—the proud arguer of Laodicea—is poor before the Lord. And the poor man—the humbled and silent one of Smyrna—he is the rich one.

WHENCE CAMEST THOU? AND WHITHER WILT
THOU GO?

(Genesis 16:8; Psalm 139:7)

As from a heart that is grieving or in an upheaval, there arises, even in the most pious, from time to time a longing to flee. Humanly speaking, there is or seems to be a motive, but in the school of Jesus Christ, we learn to remain firm where He has put us, until He Himself lifts the cloud and commands to continue to another place and experience. It is wise to remember Numbers 9:15-22.

The two-fold question in the heading of this writing was asked by the Angel of the Lord to Hagar who was fleeing from Sarah, her mistress. There have been profound meditations on the name of HAGAR—SARAH—wilderness—Angel of the Lord. We, however, will limit ourselves to the two-fold interrogation, “Whence and Where?” Let us read Genesis 16:7: “And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai’s maid, whence camest thou? And whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.” Hagar

answered the first question: she was fleeing because she had suffered, and did not want to remain in the presence of her mistress. However, she did not answer, and did not know how to answer, the second question, "Whither wilt thou go?" And since she knew the WHENCE, but not the WHITHER, the Angel continued, "And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands." Return! Remain where you are; suffer and wait patiently. There is a future.

Relating more closely to ourselves, let us read the great Psalm 119 with emphasis on verses 5-14 regarding the knowledge of God: "Thou has beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike unto thee. For thou hast possessed my reins; thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

Even the Psalmist tried to flee. We also try to flee, not only from God who knows us, but also from ourselves as we continue to discover ourselves, and from familiar places and people, as for a new beginning. The psalmist asks himself, "Whither?" And he finds no place at all. And then the Lord comforts him, informing him that He knew and knows

everything, even before we are born. The psalmist gratefully exclaims, "I will praise Thee..." AMEN.

I CANNOT – I CAN

(1st John 3:9; Philippians 4:13)

It is not a boasting—rather, a truthful affirmation that which is written in Philippians 4:13: "I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHICH STRENGTHENETH ME." Certainly, not everything in the universal sense, but in the particular sense, in that which St. Paul knew. The Holy Spirit guides in all truth—that is, according to the portion that is given to us, day by day. To those who trust in the Lord, their strength is renewed, because they rise up with wings as eagles; they run and walk (Isaiah 40:31). This is clear to the one who, many times, in danger of fainting, has been renewed in the spirit, in the soul and in the body.

But that which is written in 1st John 3:9 requires a more accurate examination. Let us read: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God." "...HE CANNOT SIN..." And since in the same epistle there is the affirmation that one who sins is not of God, and there is also the affirmation that if anyone has sinned, there is the Advocate-Mediator (chapter 2:1), it is necessary to ask grace for light on serious affirmations which seem to be contradictory but are not. One of the most scrupulous translators writes, "Is not

committing sin..." (1st John 2:1) and "...cannot be committing sin." Since we can be neither more righteous nor more merciful than God, it is necessary that we meditate without prejudice. Two affirmations are possible; someone will say, "He has sinned; therefore he is not a child of God." Another will say, "He's a child of God; therefore he has not sinned." The key lies in the examination of the words "has sinned." That is, if the sin is at the base of the heart—as if to say, the dwelling place in which it lives—certainly the man has not known the Savior. But if the sin is not established in him, it is because the man is born of God.

We confess the difficulty of the subject, and the danger of abuse, making us either too righteous and therefore cruel—or too merciful and therefore weak. In the Lord, there is wisdom and measure. He that is born of God does not love—does not caress—evil. Evil is an accident, like a thorn in the living flesh, which cannot be extracted a moment too soon. In the Realm of the Spirit, there are Divine possibilities and Divine impossibilities! To the "I can do all things..." of St. Paul in Philippians 4:13, we superimpose the implicit "I cannot..." of St. Peter in 2nd Peter 1:16: "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." As if to say, "Preachers of fables and deceit! We? IMPOSSIBLE: We on the Mount have heard THIS (not that) VOICE and SEEN, finally remained with ONE alone." Amen.

HERE IS THE PATIENCE (SUFFERING) AND THE
FAITH OF THE SAINTS

(Revelation 13:10; 14:12)

Let us read Revelation 13:10 and 14:12: "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity; he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." And, "Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." The word "patience" in the text of the two verses is the same as the word "suffering." It is rich in meaning and gives the image of one who carries a very heavy weight, who is in danger of being crushed, and is ready to throw it off. The idea is, that even though he is about to faint, he calls on the Name: "Jesus—Jesus" and continues to resist. He cannot run, but although with difficulty, he walks and walks. It is suffering—and patience. It is perseverance. All is included in the word "UPOMONE."

Both verses indicate different times; each one is dangerous. Revelation 13 portrays a terrible beast, and another one, also dangerous, that exalts it. The Antichrist—and his followers; false prophets and false worshippers. Satan is at the head and directs both.

A third picture: Many who are frightened and seduced by the two "beasts," are made slaves, and in order to attract praise and profit, they cause others to be brought into slavery. There are subtle and sinister forces that appear to be benefactors—but they have poison in the tail. That is, the evil is not up front, but follows afterward.

The Holy Spirit admonishes the Church with: "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." That is, this is a trial by fire; it is necessary to suffer and to persevere. In chapter 14 there is the portrait of a special Messenger, in a time of

religious novelties, of a Gospel adjusted to man's way. It is a dangerous time. A powerful Messenger Who flies is needed—binding Himself to no one—and Who proclaims that God and the Gospel are Eternal. But the dangers are numerous; hence the need for the warning and the encouragement: "Here is the patience of the saints," and also "here are they that keep the commandments of God..." As if to say that now is the time to see if indeed we allow the Deity to command and direct us or whom?

In both cases and exhortations "the faith" is mentioned. In chapter 13:10 it is "the faith of the saints." In 14:12 it is "the faith of Jesus." Are there two faiths? No—it is one; but faith is progressive. "It is the faith in Jesus..." in Him Who has brought Grace and truth. And then, the danger growing, we, as if rushing on to a difficult step, we say, "Oh Lord, I want to take Thy faith as my own; mine is not enough. I want Thee and Thy faith and perseverance." God has faith. Jesus has faith. Oh faith of God! Oh faith of Jesus (St. Mark 11:22; Galatians 2:20). AMEN.

FROM THE FATHER TO GOD

(1st John 3:1)

Let us read 1st John 3:1: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." Perhaps, at least some of us have read in a

hurry, recognizing only one important part, and ignoring the other. The Holy Spirit bears witness to us that we are the sons of God; that is, that He is the Father and we the sons, but following this, He wants that from the Father, always by grace, we are brought or brought again to God. Let us meditate:

After His Love has adopted us as sons in the Son, He wants to lead us into the communion of the Strength and Power of Himself. Two immutable truths are ours too. Our Father is God; that is, He is Strong, Powerful; God (the Powerful One) is our Father. Being our Father, He loves us; being God (the Strong One) He holds us securely in His Hand.

The words of St. John emphasize the Love of God as if it were a twofold Love: when He has begotten us in Jesus (TECNA), and when, already being sons, He reveals to us that all power is in Him and, therefore, we have nothing to fear. Rather, He gives a spirit of vigor and of courage. Perhaps these observations seem to be useless or superfluous; but not so, if we weigh the words and their order, as written by one who experienced them.

“How He loved him...” exclaimed some persons when seeing Jesus weeping at the tomb of Lazarus. However, quickly afterward, if they did not say it, they could have had the pleasure of saying, “How powerful He is—that death obeys Him!”

On a certain occasion, the disciples already sure that He loved them, exclaimed, “What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?” (Mark 4:41).

In the second epistle to Timothy 1:7 we read: “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Note: spirit of power and vigor. Elsewhere (Ephesians 3:16), power and virtue are promised. In the

second epistle of St. Peter 1:5 the "Virtue of God" is mentioned. The Lion is the Lamb—and the Lamb is also the Lion. Lamb for suffering—Lion for defending those who trust in Him—and to conquer and to demolish the lions. In Psalm 62:11 we read: "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God."

Having become a young son, the Father reveals Himself to you as God (STRONG ONE), so that you too may be strong in Him. And afterward there is more: He makes you a mature son, leading you into intimate communion with Him. Son and friend to whom He reveals His secrets.

THE AGES MEET AT GOLGOTHA

"Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." (Hebrews 13:12-14).

It is a sad truth that many find themselves in great confusion, especially in religious environments. Few succeed in escaping the tumult of a disturbed, agitated mind, and in finding the way out of a distressing labyrinth of theories that contradict each other, arriving to the state of rest. In Galatians 4:4, 5 we read: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made

under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

The fullness of the time... Time is composed of many times. Here the time refers to fullness, to the conjunction of the ages—of the epochs. In the life of each one, there is a fullness of time, conjunction of periods or epochs. Our subject is Christ with reference to the ages, the times. At His birth, the times met each other at Calvary; and at His resurrection, the times met each other before the tomb, and after.

Grace is needed in order to understand Calvary. Several ages, several times, several worlds, met each other here. The time of the law, of the civil authority, the Roman Empire; the time of philosophy, that is, the Greek world of shrewdness and subtle reasoning of the mind (logic), which had infiltrated itself even into Judaism; the time of Judaism represented by the priestly caste—scribes and Pharisees; and the world of usurpers, represented by King Herod, an Idumean who, by adulation and deceit, had obtained power in Palestine from the Roman Empire.

Opposite these various worlds or times which seemed to be powerful and invincible, there was another, that of Christ, represented by a Man with such a weak and insignificant aspect, that it was not only useless but even absurd to think or to imagine that His world could conquer the other worlds.

The representative of the Roman Empire at the time of the death of Jesus was an unhappy man, We say unhappy, although his career had been drenched in blood that was shed. And yet the crisis of his life came when, without having premeditated or desiring it, he met Jesus Christ in that prophetic morning in which he, Pilate, was called to pronounce the verdict against the Son of Man/Son of God. Carefully reading the account given by the four Gospels,

especially that of Matthew (chapter 27), we can barely hide a sentiment that we could call sympathy toward this man. As a rule, we judge events of the past without realizing that finding ourselves in similar circumstances, we would not have acted better than the protagonists of that time, but perhaps worse, because the spirit of Pilate is not dead. Let us meditate without judging persons, because God alone is the judge.

Faced with the unusual case, the Governor replied to the Jews saying, "Whither of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas." (Matthew 27:21). Pilate had proposed this choice hoping that the people would have been ashamed to give the preference to a murderer, and would therefore have decided in favor of Jesus. Vain hope. People do not easily understand how inexorable religious hatred can be. The chief priests and the elders, knowing that Pilate would listen to the people rather than to them, incited and persuaded the masses to ask for Barabbas, and this in order that Jesus might be exterminated. And they answered: "Barabbas."

Pilate remained stupefied. He had had his first surprise that morning when, out of respect for the Jewish traditions, he had gone to meet them. They desired to eat the Passover, and did not want to contaminate themselves by entering into an enclosure of a palace of the Gentiles. Then Pilate condescended to go to a neutral place where he could examine the case in their presence. As soon as Jesus was presented to him, his first glance at the accused inspired in the Governor the fear of finding himself in the presence of a man who was not only uncommon but much less a criminal. A singular sensation agitated his hardened heart and his indifferent mind. The process began with a few questions asked by the Governor. He first asked the Jews why they were presenting that Man to him. What crime had Jesus

committed? Every accusation must be declared by the accuser—not by the accused, and much less by the judge. The astuteness of the Jews—of the religious sect of Judaism—was obvious by their answer, that if Jesus were not a malefactor, they would not have brought Him before Pilate. This was a strange introduction for a criminal process. In this behavior, the sophism of the Greek mind is evident—aside from the aesthetics and the art, the mind of that people was falsified to such an extent by philosophic subtleties, that strange and contradictory conclusions resulted from their reasoning.

Pilate continued to interrogate, and the Jews, provoked by their leaders, continued to hurl accusation upon accusation. The Governor could not help noticing the behavior of the prisoner and marveled at His silence. All who meet Jesus are in a state of wonderment because He is wonderful, and they are transported from the realm of revelation of human nothingness opposite His divine majesty. Pilate marveled and did what was possible to save Jesus. His situation was somewhat precarious because many misdeeds had obscured his past, and he was afraid of being accused before Caesar. The Roman Empire that did not enter into open conflict unless constrained to do so, desired peace in the colonies; it was informed of the difficulties inherent in the government of Palestine. The religious castes were aware of this, therefore they intimidated Pilate in the certainty that he would yield to their request. A “duel” resulted between the judge and the accusers. He, the accused, remained calm and serene.

Now, looking at this prisoner—Unique, as there had never been and never will be—now at the accusers, Pilate’s perplexity increased, and turning again to Jesus, he asked Him, “Answerest Thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against Thee.” Did Pilate perhaps believe Jesus

to be deaf, by which He did not hear the accusations hurled against Him? No, this is not the meaning of the question, "Answerest Thou nothing?" Judges are wise people; they can easily size up and sense a situation. An accused person can say many things—even proclaim his innocence; but his behavior, his gestures, are enough to reveal that which is in the depths of his being. In this case, the accused one was the only one who remained calm; no agitation, no emotion appeared on His Countenance—nothing in those deep eyes that were looking beyond the scene of death, to His Father. The false accusations did not disturb His heart because His conscience was in peace and His plan of redemption remained unshakable.

Although Pilate probably had not made a definite analysis, he must have sensed that he found himself in the presence of a prisoner who was different from all the others. In the tragic experience of his long career, he had never met a man like this Man. That's why he asked, "Answerest Thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against thee." Jesus did not answer. The Holy Scripture says: "But Jesus yet answered nothing." Not only did Jesus not give any verbal response, but His countenance, His eyes, remained impassive. He was in the calm of heaven.

Pilate marveled greatly, and yet the compromises with the people began. The latter, under the influence of and incited by the chief priests and the elders, asked that Barabbas be released and Jesus killed.

Pilate, struck with stupor and perplexity by such a mandate, pronounced the words which are heavy with eternal meaning, "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" More than a question directed to the Jews, it was a sad soliloquy. If it were possible to know the many thoughts that crowded that perturbed mind, and the sentiments that

clashed in that disturbed heart, we would hear Pilate say to himself, "I have seen many condemned to death. I have shed human blood like water. The crimes committed by me are innumerable. One more death does not matter to me; and yet something in me warns me that before me is a Person like no other, unique in the world. This man has been placed in my hands because of envy; He is innocent. Curiously, I cannot classify Him in any category of men. Whatever must I do with Him? Let Him go...? I will place myself in a situation with serious consequences—persecution on the part of the Jews and accused before Caesar. Condemn Him...? I go against that sentiment situated deep within me that I cannot analyze, but which disturbs me. What must I do with Him?"

Pilate found himself between two equally fatal alternatives. While he was debating with himself, confused and disturbed, a secret message from his wife was sent to him that said to him, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man; for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." We don't know if this message by itself could have prevailed in the mind of Pilate; but together with the message, there were before him on the one hand, the figure of the accused one—solemn in His majesty; and on the other hand, the ruthless hatred of his accusers. The dilemma was terrible. "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" The appeal was in vain because the enemies were determined; nothing could change their plans. Like the howling of the storm, all shouted, "Let Him be crucified."

Wonder of wonders! Later on, seeing that he was not succeeding in dissuading them from their intention, Pilate took water and washed his hands saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it." Inebriated by the power of its leaders, and as though charmed by a snake, the crowd, of one accord, answered (oh! the complicity of evil, especially in the religious masses!): "His blood be on us,

and on our children.” History confirms this sinister verdict. Let us have compassion for this unhappy people, because we are not better than they. History is before our eyes, and not just the philosophy of history!

From this sad incident and from Pilate’s investigative questions, we come to some conclusions which are pertinent to our times, and that we hope may be a suitable prologue for our book. HE—the same Man about Whom Pilate marveled, the same Man who, that day, found Himself before various worlds and epochs: it was the juncture of the ages, of the centuries, the “pleroma tou chrounou”—the fullness of times. These times, these ages, met with another time, another age. The powers that appeared invincible met a Power that day that appeared almost insignificant, but that was like the miniscule mustard seed destined to become great.

Whoever studies the Christian religion and begins to consider the various denominations and confessions—we do not intend to analyze, and much less to criticize or to judge any of them—cannot deny that there is a conflict of opinions, doctrines and conclusions, all drawn from the same Book, and having all the pretense of depending on the same Person. But do we read the Book as it ought to be read? Do we understand this Person as the Omnipotent God would like that we know Him? We will try to give a sober answer to this question, which can never be exhausted, but shall be only a suggestion.

The various elements that met each other—and still meet each other—around Jesus, were and are, opposite one to the other, until every Christian recognizes the Babel of religious confusion and arrives at a definitive conclusion. Who is right? Which sect is right? Who has really understood the plan of God? Why have so many errors arisen, although the

starting point is the same? Has Christianity remained pure in the passage of time and of opinions? Must we believe theosophical theories...; accept the directives of Christian Science...; must we, pointing out portions from the Epistles and from the Gospels, accept the resulting conclusions, one after the other? Where are we? Unfortunately, alas—no matter where we turn, we find ourselves facing this dilemma: either this directive or Jesus Christ; either a sect or the Son of Man/Son of God. We must choose between sectarianism and Christ, between opinions and revelation. The day must come when from the manifold we must arrive at the One—from the complex to the simple. For a time the Lord permits us to enter into the complex, to listen to many theories, and even to see in the history of the Church many conflicts of opinions and of deliberations. Alas! We too have been perplexed and have asked ourselves like Pilate, “What shall we do with Jesus, called Christ, the Anointed?” We too have enemies and are face to face with conflicts, desiring to do things our way, and to get revenge. Gifted as we are with the faculty of thinking, we imagine that we are qualified to interpret the Scriptures, without realizing that by so doing, little by little we will become and create a sect based on our own theology.

And again the question arises, “What will I do with Jesus, the Anointed, the Christ?” The answer is: “Either Him or me.” Me? Reader, don’t be surprised, because in your opinions and in your sectarianism, you are there. Many so-called Christians still worship themselves, not Christ. They use that blessed Name as a mantle, but in the depth of their being there is the idol “I.” Then, what to do? Let us remember the words of the Great Guide, that if anyone wants—if he is really disposed to follow Him—he must deny himself. The first thing to do is to deny ourselves—our own mind, our preferences, our fears and our choices—in order to follow in the footsteps of the Son of Man/Son of God. To

those who might think that we have not presented any conclusion, we answer, "Are we obliged to offer a conclusion, to resolve the problem? Are we perhaps asked to understand everything, to grasp and to analyze with the mind all of the Truth? Is there not something of which we will always be ignorant? Must we not wait for the beyond, the realm of the fullness of Light, in order that things may be clarified? Does God perhaps always declare His motives? Do we know and understand all of the mysteries of God? Do we know anything as we should?" Reader, in your heart, you know what the answer is. Let us put an end to the agitation of the restless mind, and wait for the Lord to reveal everything to us face to face. In this life we see and know only in part—the fullness is reserved for the beyond. Let us step blindly upon the footsteps of the Son of Man. And instead of investigating and trying to establish theories on isolated texts, let us try to understand that those sacred books were written for specific occasions and for a specific purpose. In fact the New Testament was written quite some time after the apostolic preaching had started, and according as the circumstances required. For this reason, it cannot be adapted exactly to all occasions and necessities. We can extract blessed instruction from them, but we must not begin with the Book to arrive at Christ, but must come down from Christ to the Book. The Revelation, the divine intuition takes first place; doctrine comes afterward. In the original, the term used for "word" (*rema*) refers to deeds in a portion of the Old Testament (Septuagint). In the Lord, words and deeds are equivalent. Words are reality and not vague expressions that pass away. For which, if we desire reality in us, we must begin by looking at Jesus, placing ourselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Whom He has sent as a Teacher in the Church. Naturally, the Holy Spirit uses also the Book, but only as a confirmation. In everything, even if we listen to teachers and read books, we must wait for the last word, the confirmation, from the mouth of Jesus Christ

Himself. We have only one Master, as we have only one Father, still having many fathers in the Church and many teachers instructed by the Great Teacher. Thoughts and opinions come and go, but we must bring them into captivity to Jesus Christ, leaving them in His mighty Hands, whence He will give us that which we need, and accepting only as much as He continues to repeat to us each time, in the quietness of rest and peace.

This is the solution; we don't know any other. Fascinated today by a clever human teacher, we can remain enchanted by another one tomorrow, even if the latter makes us arrive at an opposite conclusion. While the vicious cycle is repeated, we remain always in doubt—never established. But blessed is the day when, not expecting anything from ourselves, and having passed through experiences and having listened to many and read a lot, by His Grace we shall have entered into rest, leaving all the problems in His mighty hands.

At this point, a word to the Church and to all those who peruse these pages until the end—imperfect, yes, but written with all sincerity. The answer of Judaism—speaking of the people and not of the dispensation of the Old Testament, a sacred dispensation that we revere and which has finished its work—to the question of the Roman Governor, “What shall I do?” was: “Let Him be crucified!”

We little understand the Cross of Jesus, because we are too far from that time and from the first impressions of apostolic preaching. For the Greeks who could not imagine a crucified man as a Savior of humanity, the Cross was foolishness. For the Jews, it was a stumbling-block. The time of the crucifixion is so remote by now that it is not easy for us to appreciate the importance of the Cross, unless we can picture for ourselves a crucified Man, hanging between heaven and

earth. Heaven had not yet received Him. The earth had expelled and rejected Him. He was hanged like one who is cursed, between the height and the depth.

This is also the state of the Church, of the true followers of Jesus, whose faith—who still looking to God—often pass through deep nights, without revelations, without visible blessings, because the plan of God is that we depend only on His faithfulness, knowing Who He is. God cannot lie; therefore He will think about making us reach the other shore. If we do not have the victory—and no one has the complete victory—He will transport us into the realm of Light. Let us therefore have patience; let us appreciate faith, because without faith it is impossible to please God. In the meantime, we too are crucified individuals. In saying “we,” we do not mean to indicate those who are and want to remain sectarians, but those who are crucified—not the crucifiers—those who are slandered—not the slanderers—those who suffer—and yet they do not inflict suffering on others. They are the true Church of Christ—they live a crucified life.

As the Bridegroom was crucified, thus the Church must be crucified. It will not necessarily be a physical crucifixion, but it will be a crucifixion of the heart and of the mind. Let us remember the words of the Song of Solomon: we must place the Bridegroom as a seal upon our heart, loving Him with an eternal, invincible love. And like a seal upon our arm, because all of our work must come from Him and be accomplished by means of Him and for Him.

Jesus was crucified in a desolate place called Golgotha—skull—Calvary: no trees, no vegetation, nothing attractive, no glances, no voices, no countenance—nothing, save the squalid and somber summit of a hill on which the blood of the Innocent One dripped, drop by drop. We too must become a Calvary, destitute of any pretense, and receive life

for as much as His blood, which falls drop by drop, will transmit.

Like Jesus, the Christ—finding Himself before various worlds, without showing signs of emotions nor any fear—remained serene and calm, depending continually on His Father, and accepted the crucifixion, the terminal point of His career, so too the Church must remain unperturbed, serene in the face of the Babel of religious conflicts, free in the spirit and from vengeance, never judging, nor seeking to reason or to persuade anyone by his own efforts. Pilate, the man from whom one would least expect it, was disturbed that day in Jerusalem. Cruel man as he was, stained by many misdeeds, he was moved by the countenance of Jesus. Someone may be convinced by our conduct, because as we do not live for ourselves, we do not die to ourselves. We are in a world of relationships where everything touches everything and everyone.

The worlds met at the birth of Jesus—He remained incomparably unique. The worlds met in the tribunal hall, at Calvary, at His death—He remained incomparably unique. Worlds meet around the Christian—he too must remain incomparable. At the sepulcher of Jesus, honored jurists and magistrates met, together with the penitent sinner, the mother of Jesus and those who were most affectionate to Him. At His resurrection, great things happened. And yet, the hatred of His enemies was never appeased—not even the resurrection moved them. Alas! No evident sign is efficacious where hatred dominates—and religious hatred is the worst of all. Worlds met at Jerusalem during the apostolic preaching. Epochs, worlds, met when the Sanhedrin tried to reduce Peter and John to silence. The world has always defied and still defies Jesus. In the final analysis and in conclusion, we note that there are two forces that dominate the universe: the good—God; the evil—Satan.

The evil cannot be eternal; at the end, the good, the spirit of good will triumph. At the beginning, the worlds seemed to be—and even now seem to be—invincible, omnipotent; to defy them, there has been—and there is—the Unique Person of Jesus. He appeared in Jerusalem without defense, without power, and was crucified in weakness; but He arose in power. Jesus seemed to be, but never was—and not even now is He—weak. In fact, there is no weakness in suffering; rather, the only strength is in suffering. The most elevated expression of the Wisdom and of the Power of God is in the crucifixion—the Cross being the culmination of power and of wisdom. That which seemed insignificant, without strength, had to be the only thing that has a meaning—that has power; everything else is transitory. Only One is the Truth; although the affirmations of events in the Book were—and are—true, in the biblical language, truth is that which remains, that which has substance, that which is eternal.

Seated on a hill that dominated Jerusalem with its great and imposing temple rebuilt by Herod, the magnificence of which defies any description—the pride of the Jews—a Man without fame, without many followers, surrounded by a few insignificant disciples originating from a despised province, the Galilee of the Gentiles—this Man who in His humiliation appeared to be poor, pronounced the words that are the vital theme, the red thread that guides us in the labyrinth of life and frees us from the various opinions of humans, even in the religious camp. This Man, Jesus, said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall never pass away.”

Reader, so be it that all may disappear in your life; do not adhere to anything, to any creed, to any opinion, to any definition, and to any class of people, because sooner or later all will disappear. Our aim must be one Person, one Countenance, one Message. Allow Christ to have the last

word in you in everything, because heaven and earth shall pass away, but Jesus and His words are eternal. So be it that all in your life may disappear, in order that only Jesus may remain.

The subject is so sublime that we ask the reader to be patient if, at this point, we add something that has passed in our mind and heart many times. We all have periods of doubt and perplexity. We also are familiar with the scientific world and know that the universe is immense. We know that some people even doubt the existence of a person by the name of Jesus Christ. What folly! While in our daily correspondence we write a date that necessarily had to start at a certain point in a certain place, many times we doubt the origin and the cause of this date. Even though seeing the result of Christianity, that has, like leaven, permeated everyone and everything in the world—although certain ones may not even have heard the name of Christ—it sometimes happens that we still doubt.

We hazard a hypothesis. Let us assume that Christ does not exist and the Gospel is the invention of a few deluded people, or even that it is a literary product of an epoch with a mentality and civilization different from ours. Alas! The illogicality of the so-called logical people is more illogical than the strangest thing that we can imagine. But let's go on with our hypothesis. There is no Christ, no Jesus; only chaos. God is so distant and mysterious that no one can say anything about Him, not having the One who can give the revelation of Him. Let us assume that all is destroyed. And then...? We do not know what the answer of the reader may be. Here is ours:

We do not hold such an assumption because we know in Whom we have believed. There is a reality in us, thanks to the powerful Holy Spirit. But assuming any assumption

whatsoever, we answer thus: in that day rich in events, in which Jesus deliberated returning to Judea in order to resurrect Lazarus, for which the disciples feared that Jesus would be stoned by the Jews—Thomas, speaking for everyone, pronounced the words that were like an encouragement for the others, as well as an affirmation of what he had in his heart. His thought was: “It is useless to dissuade the Master, because He wants to go to Judea. Useless also to have illusions that they will let Him live, because they have deliberated to kill Him. But what shall we do if He goes to Jerusalem alone and dies? What will become of us if we are missing Him? We must decide! As for going... He will go; and we do not want to remain without Him.”

“Let us also go, that we may die with Him.” (John 11:16). What happened is known. Lazarus was resurrected. Jesus was not killed that time, but held back for the crucifixion.

If such a Christ had never existed, if the narrative that we have were the invention of illusionists and of distorted minds, what would remain to us, who have fed ourselves of the Gospel, who for many years have been in the school of the Holy Spirit, and that we have, for this powerful Jesus a love which is always more intensified, having recognized the vanity of everything around us, and having lost all confidence in ourselves and in humanity—outside of Grace? What would become of us if this powerful Lord had never existed, if the Gospel were a fantasy, what would remain? Where would we go? In whom would we trust? Without Jesus there would be chaos, and like Thomas we would say, “If this is nothing but an illusion, nothing remains; it is better then to disappear with Him! We do not desire to remain in this world, because we hope in nothing, in no one!” But—thank God there is a glorious but—Jesus, the only REALITY of the universe, Who leads into the realm of full reality, is

ALIVE! And because He lives, we also live. Although we live in a world of confusion, let us look to the beyond, to the day in which, translated into the realm of Light, we shall see everything clearly, remaining forever intimately united to the Son of Man/Son of God.

Blessed be His Name now and forever. Amen.

THE END

INDEX

Page No.

SOUL BLOOD – SOUL PERSON – PERSONALITY.....	1
FROM OUR CORRESPONDENCE	3
DEVOTING ONESELF TO PRAYER	3
IF ANYONE IS ASHAMED OF HIM AND HIS WORDS ..	5
SODOM - WHERE THEY CRUCIFIED THE KING.....	6
WITH THE WILD BEASTS AND WITH THE ANGELS ...	9
SAVE ME FROM THIS HOUR - FOR THIS CAUSE	
CAME I UNTO THIS HOUR.....	14
IT IS A CLOUD – IT WILL PASS	15
SILENCE.....	16
THERE WHERE YOU ARE	17
I KNOW.....	18
ACCUSING... GOD.....	22
ELIAS MUST COME – ELIAS HAS COME.....	25
FAITH WITH REGARD TO THE PEOPLE.....	30
THEY HEARD THE VOICE - THEY DID NOT HEAR	
THE VOICE	31
THE KEY IS IN THE WILL	32
SLAVE OF WHAT? SLAVE OF WHOM?.....	35
GO TO THINE HOUSE	38
SIN FOR NOT DOING.....	42
HE PRAYED EARNESTLY.....	43
THE NUMBER OF THY DAYS I WILL FULFIL.....	44
NO SHEPHERD	46
WHERE IS HE THAT IS BORN KING OF THE JEWS ...	47
OBSTINACY.....	50
SLAVE OF THE SEVENTH YEAR.....	53
IN THE HOUSE OF THE POTTER.....	58
IN THE COUNTRY OF EXILE.....	62

SIGNS OF THE NEW BIRTH.....	64
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST: OUR HOPE.....	65
TWO QUESTIONS AND TWO ANSWERS	66
RESURRECTION AND POWER	68
JUDGMENT OF THE PEOPLES	73
EXTREMES; THOSE OF LYSTRA AND THOSE OF THE FUNERAL.....	77
EXTREMISTS IN DOCTRINE - THE SUM OF THE WORD	80
THE REMEDIES	81
IDLE QUESTIONS (OR OUT OF CURIOSITY).....	82
THE CHILDREN OF THE STRANGER.....	83
INCREASE OUR FAITH-IF YE HAD FAITH.....	84
DEATH: REFUGE OF THE JUST	88
TRUTH AND CHARITY - JUSTICE AND PEACE.....	90
TODAY.....	91
WHY SO MANY SCANDALS AMONG THOSE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT?.....	92
FATHERS AND CHILDREN.....	93
LOT, THE JUDGE	97
THE WORD OF HIS MOUTH.....	99
NO LIMIT TO SALT	100
WHAT IS THAT TO THEE - FOLLOW THOU ME.....	103
ENEMY OF THINE ENEMIES - ADVERSARY OF THINE ADVERSARIES	106
PUTTING FORTH THE HAND TO THE ARK OF GOD	108
VOICE - WORD - LIGHT	109
ENSNARING IN WORDS.....	111
THE HAND AT THE THRONE.....	112
THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE WICKED	113
BLESSING AND CURSING.....	115
BY NAME.....	116
DEAD FAITH.....	117
ROSE - LILY.....	119
BLESSED IGNORANCE.....	122

DEATH BEFORE LIFE	126
THE GREATER PUNISHMENT OR THE PLAGUES UPON THE HEART	127
BELIEVING AND OBEYING	129
BLOOD SPEAKS.....	131
SEPARATED UNTO THE GOSPEL	133
FALSE SHEPHERDS - DUMB DOGS	134
THE THREE CRUCIFIED ONES	137
APES AND PARROTS - PEACOCKS	139
SIMON, I HAVE SOMEWHAT TO SAY UNTO THEE..	140
ANOTHER KING - ONE JESUS	143
MEDITATING	145
SEEING - TASTING, DEATH	146
BUT I HATE HIM.....	148
THREE RUINS	149
THEREFORE PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR CONSCIENCE.....	150
THE VOICE OF THE LORD	151
BEWARE	154
ALL THESE THINGS ARE AGAINST ME	156
THE WILL OF THE GENTILES	157
EBEN - EZER	159
THE GOD OF PATIENCE	162
UNLESS I HAD BELIEVED	165
TWO OR THREE TIMES	169
THE SECOND MESSAGE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST....	171
WHAT SEEK YE? WHAT THING?.....	173
THE DECEIT OF THE REWARD OF BALAAM.....	176
BY ANOTHER WAY - BY THE SAME WAY.....	178
LOVING CORRECTION.....	179
REMEMBER-JESUS CHRIST.....	180
THE WICKED AND HIS WAY - THE UNRIGHTEOUS AND HIS THOUGHTS.....	182
THE HAND ON THE CENSER - LEPROSY ON THE FOREHEAD	185
RECEIVING ALL THAT CAME IN UNTO HIM	187

IS A SYSTEM NECESSARY.....	193
BECAUSE YE ASK NOT.....	195
FATHER, I THANK THEE THAT THOU HAST HEARD ME.....	197
MORE DEEDS THAN WORDS	200
LIKE AS WHEN SHE WAS BROUGHT UP WITH HIM.....	202
SEPARATED - THEY HAVE SEPARATED.....	204
PRAYER AT THREE TIMES.....	205
THE KEY IS IN YOUR HAND.....	206
IN THE LAST DAY.....	208
TODAY - TOMORROW - THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.....	211
NOT OF PRIVATE INTERPRETATION.....	215
THREE UNCLEAN SPIRITS LIKE FROGS.....	218
ENDS OF THE EARTH AND THE SHAKING OUT OF THE WICKED.....	220
THE RICH MAN AND THE POOR MAN	222
WHENCE CAMEST THOU? AND WHITHER WILT THOU GO.....	224
I CANNOT - I CAN.....	226
HERE IS THE PATIENCE (SUFFERING) AND THE FAITH OF THE SAINTS.....	228
FROM THE FATHER TO GOD.....	229
THE AGES MEET AT GOLGOTHA	231