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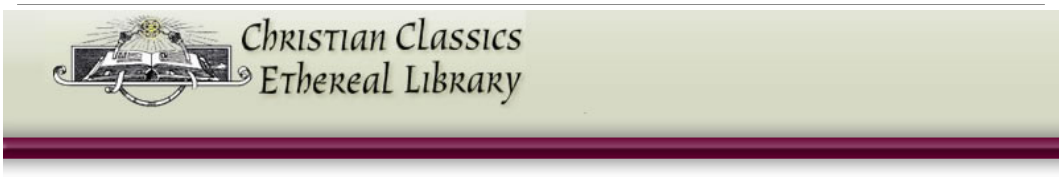
Commentary on Matthew, Mark, Luke - Volume 1
John Calvin



Commentary on Matthew, Mark, Luke - Volume 1

Author(s): Calvin, John (1509-1564)
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(Translator)

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Description: In these three volumes, Calvin provides an engaging commentary on the synoptic gospels--Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Calvin does not separate his treatment of the three, but comments on the three books as a whole. Of his commentaries, Calvin's *Commentary on Matthew, Mark, and Luke* is well-known--unsurprisingly, given the power, insight, and instruction it has. As always, Calvin's commentary has an eye towards everyday concerns and he incorporates a shrewd practical insight throughout. An important and useful commentary, *Calvin's Commentary on Matthew, Mark, and Luke* is deserving of study!
Tim Perrine
CCEL Staff Writer

Subjects: The Bible
Works about the Bible

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COMMENTARY
ON A
HARMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS,
MATTHEW, MARK, AND LUKE,

BY JOHN CALVIN

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL LATIN, AND COLLATED WITH THE AUTHOR'S FRENCH VERSION,
BY THE REV. WILLIAM PRINGLE

VOLUME FIRST

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THE

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

All the writings of John Calvin are marked by extraordinary vigor, learning, and judgment. Few of them are so well known as the institutes of the christian religion — a systematic treatise, which, though written at the early age of twenty-four, was universally acknowledged to be a production of the highest ability. Concise and luminous, powerful in argument, scriptural, devout and practical, it has not been superseded by any later work. But the fame which he acquired by the institutes was fully sustained by his expository writings, which possess at least equal claims on the attention of divines. They contributed powerfully to diffuse the pure Gospel of Christ, commanded the applause of all the Reformed Churches, and received even from enemies no mean commendation. More than a century after his valuable life had closed, they occupied a place in every theological library. The learned Matthew Poole, in the preface to his Synopsis, apologizes for the small number of his quotations from them, on the express ground that the Commentaries themselves, he had every reason to believe, were in the hands of all his readers.

This reputation, after having suffered a partial eclipse, will soon, in all probability, regain its former brightness. The first tendency to this improvement was discovered in a neighboring country, where the distinguishing doctrines of Christianity had long been supplanted by a creed little removed from infidelity. In Germany, Biblical criticism is almost a national pursuit. That unconquerable industry which had already crowned her scholars with laurels in Greek and Roman literature, has given them as unquestionable a pre-eminence in the field of sacred philology. Had such rare attainments been always consecrated to the honor of the Redeemer, every good man would have rejoiced. Unhappily, they were but too frequently employed in maintaining the most dangerous errors, in opposing every inspired statement which the mind of man is unable fully to comprehend, in divesting religion of its spiritual and heavenly character, and in undermining the whole fabric of revealed truth. But a gracious Providence has raised up other men, whom, though we may not feel ourselves at liberty to subscribe to all their views, we cannot but hail as the friends of evangelical truth, and admire for their holy fortitude in coming

> to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty,
>
> (Judges 5:23.)

At the head of this illustrious band it is almost superfluous to name Professor Tholuck of Halle, admitted by the most competent judges, both in Britain and on the Continent, to be one of the first biblical scholars of the age. Having been led by his own researches, and by public events, to examine the writings of the Reformer, he hastened to draw the attention of his countrymen to the neglected treasures. His own Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans afforded an opportunity which was eagerly embraced. Not satisfied with this brief notice, he wrote an elaborate and masterly dissertation on "The merits of Calvin as an Inter-

preter of the Holy Scriptures," a translation of which appeared shortly afterwards in the (American) "Biblical Repository." He superintended a handsome octavo edition of Calvin's Commentaries on the New Testament, printed at Berlin, and sold at a moderate price. To another eminent interpreter he candidly awards the honor of having led the way in this undertaking.[1] But he was one of the earliest to follow in the path which had been marked out, and has labored, beyond all his contemporaries, to make the Commentaries of Calvin more extensively known, and more highly esteemed.

Our Author has exerted a powerful influence on all succeeding expositors. They have found their interest in listening to his instructions, and have been more deeply indebted to him than is generally known. Many valuable interpretations of passages of Scripture appeared for the first time in his writings, and have ever since been warmly approved. In other cases, the views which had been previously held are placed by him in so strong a light as to remove every doubt, and satisfy the most cautious inquiry. And yet the stores, from which so much has been drawn, are far from being exhausted, nor is their value greatly lowered by improvements which have been subsequently made. The department of History presents an analogous case. Documents which had been overlooked are carefully examined. Conflicting evidence is more accurately weighed. Important transactions assume a new aspect, or, at least, are altered in their subordinate details. Still, there are historians, in whose narrative the great lines of truth are so powerfully drawn, that the feebler, though more exact, delineations of other men cannot supply their place.

In the chief moral requisite for such a work Calvin is excelled by none. He is an honest interpreter. No consideration would have induced him to wrest the words of Scripture from their plain meaning. Those who may question his conclusions cannot trace them to an unworthy motive. Timid theologians will be occasionally startled by his expositions. Though they may not absolutely impeach the soundness of his doctrine, they will tremble for the fate of some favorite theory or ingenious argument. With such minds he has no sympathy. He examines the Scriptures with the humility of one who *inquires at the oracle of God,* (2 Samuel 16:23,) and proclaims the reply with the faith of one who knows that the *word of the Lord is tried,* (Psalm 18:30.)

Intimately connected with this integrity of purpose is the Catholic spirit which he constantly breathes. His labors are dedicated to no sect, but to the cause of divine truth. If his opinions do not find equal favor with all true Christians, they are made to feel that he addresses them as brethren in Christ Jesus. In his eye the Church of Christ is one. He never

1 "To Lucke belongs the honor of having first referred, in the department of exigesis, to Luther, Beza, Calvin, Camerarius, and many other excellent interpreters of the period of the Reformation. He was followed by the writer of these pages in his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans." — *Literarischer Anzeiger fur* 1831. Biblical Repository, July 1832.

forgets the ties which unite all believers to each other and to their exalted Head. Are there any whose sentiments are hardly distinguishable from *those things which are most surely believed among us,* (Luke 1:1,) and yet who associate with the name of *Calvinism* all that is stern and repulsive? Let them follow the expositions of this *master in Israel.* They will find the most remarkable peculiarities of his creed boldly avowed, but accompanied by other revealed truths to which they had supposed him to be indifferent, and by no ordinary earnestness of practical exhortation. Amidst his severest denunciations of doctrinal error, they will not fail to discover the same enlarged views and Christian forbearance which animated the great apostle of the Gentiles. Rarely will they behold that sentiment more beautifully exemplified,

Grace be to all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,
(Ephesians 6:24.)

Learning ought not to be a prominent feature in a work essentially popular. But the learning of Calvin manifests itself in the most desirable manner, and adds great weight to his interpretations. Of his acquaintance with Hebrew it is unnecessary now to speak. His familiarity with the Greek language appears less in observations on phrases, or allusions to the various renderings of some passages, than in a close adherence to those shades of meaning which no translation of the Scriptures can convey. Even when he appears to have overlooked or mistaken the words, a reference to the original, which had been studiously kept out of view, will justify the unexpected remark.[2]

Origen, Chrysostom, and other Greek Fathers, were among his familiar authors. Classical writers are introduced on every proper occasion, for illustrating a term, or a custom, or the general principles of reasoning. Quotations are made from these writers, and from some of their philosophical treatises, which are seldom even consulted except by those who can read the language with considerable freedom. To say nothing of the Stagyrite, every scholar knows, for example, that no Greek prose offers more serious difficulties than the idiomatic, though fascinating, style of Plato.[3]

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2 The observation might be extended to some other expositors, who, with little parade of any kind, are qualified to instruct every class of readers. Those only who have subjected them to a close comparison with the Hebrew and Greek originals can judge of their attainments in criticism. Matthew Henry, though deservedly the most popular of this class, receives less credit than he deserves for the extent and variety of his learning.

3 This statement may require both explanation and defense. Many of those who have devoted their attention to Greek literature would be more likely to name Thucydides as an author who had cost them long and severe application. But the difficulties of that historian, though more obvious, are in reality less formidable, and will be found not to arise so directly from any peculiarities of style as from a singular condensation of thought which demands the close and sustained attention of his readers, and sometimes from an affectation of conciseness on the part of the author which leads him into obscurity. The difficulties of Plato are chiefly idiomatic, and do not lie on the surface. Like those noble performances which are said to indicate the hand of a master in the higher

In that minute analysis which is peculiar to modern criticism, Calvin may have been deficient. That he wanted the skill necessary for such investigations is not so manifest. The absence of those processes by which he arrived at his conclusions makes it difficult to determine how far the subtle elements of language had undergone his scrutiny. If we shall suppose him to have neglected these matters, our astonishment must be the greater that the deductions of recent inquirers should have been so largely anticipated. Conjectures thrown out by Sir Isaac Newton were long afterwards verified by experiments of extreme labor and delicacy. But Calvin speaks habitually with a tone of confidence. We must therefore conclude that, like the shrewd remarks to which the philosopher was pleased to give the name of *conjectures,* his discoveries were reached by a shorter route, which other minds could with difficulty follow.[4]

This extraordinary sagacity was accompanied by another quality not less needed in an interpreter, a sound judgment, which leaned neither to ancient usage nor to ingenious novelties, which refused to bow to the authority of great names, and sternly rebuked the most plausible sophistry when opposed to the plain and obvious meaning of Scripture. He took a dispassionate and wide survey, not only of the passage immediately under consideration, but of kindred expressions or sentiments that were found in any of the inspired writers. It was left to the industry of later times to collect parallels, and arrange them on the margin of our Bibles, as an invaluable aid to interpretation. But his own perusal of the sacred volume supplied him largely with such materials, and enabled him to draw them out with instinctive readiness as occasion required.

As we pass along, we meet with direct quotations, largely but appositely introduced, and tending to confirm the views which he had adopted. Still more frequently we observe a copious use of that phraseology which is peculiar to the sacred writers, and which falls on

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walks of art, in which the uninitiated hardly discover any meaning, but which reveal to the cultivated eye or ear the highest beauty or magnificence of conception, the masterly strokes of Plato are not perceived by ordinary readers, and can only be appreciated by the accomplished scholar. He who reads with case the original Greek of Plato, following out all the windings of his subtle argument, (and Calvin appears to have accomplished this task,) must have previously unraveled the most perplexing intricacies of that language.

4 It may be proper to mention, that a considerable part of this Preface has already appeared in *The Biblical Cabinet,* Vol. XXX., prefixed to a translation of *Calvin's Commentaries on the Epistles to the Galatians and Ephesians.* With the kind permission of my friend, the publisher of that series, I have transferred it to a place where it is not less appropriate than in its former situation. Some remarks on Calvin's excellencies as a Commentator, and on the estimation in which he is now held, might be expected to precede the first volume of a modem version of his Commentaries, that has been brought out by the Calvin Translation Society. No change having taken place in the carefully matured views which were formerly expressed, it has been judged advisable to present them in their original form, rather than to leave them out, or to undergo the labor of fresh writing.

the pious ear with refreshing melody. In him it rises higher than that felicitous application of Scripture which our more elegant writers have cultivated for the purpose of imparting a literary charm to their compositions; for those beauties came to him unsought while he was aiming at something higher than the mere ornaments of diction, and the language of Scripture had been so thoroughly interwoven with his ordinary style, that he must have been frequently unconscious of its presence. To aid the reader in discovering those allusions, the passages from which they have been taken are generally marked. The references made by our Author himself may be supposed to be abundant, and must have struck many persons as a prominent feature of his writings; but in far more numerous cases, no clue was given to his authorities, and some pains have been taken to supply the omissions.

The Latin original has been scrupulously followed. His own vernacular version gives us some idea of the freedom, spirit, and elegance, with which he would have accommodated himself to the taste of the English reader, if it had been executed in our language. But a translator is not permitted to use the same liberties as the author, and faithfulness demands that he shall adhere strictly to the copy which is set before him. The meaning has been given without addition or omission, and even the structure of the sentences has been followed, so far as that could be done without violating the purity of English idiom. To exhibit the peculiar excellencies of such a writer, or, where that could not be done, to find in a modern tongue a suitable equivalent, was no easy task. His admirably concise diction, and rapid but masterly transitions, and above all, that rare felicity of expression for which his severest judges have given him credit, render it difficult to represent the style and manner of so great a master of composition.

All the assistance that could be derived from our Author's French version has been thankfully accepted. It would have been unwise as well as ungrateful to leave out of view so authoritative an exposition of his meaning, or to disregard the production of one whose command of his native tongue is acknowledged by the ablest critics to have anticipated the elegancies of a later age. "He wrote in Latin," says D'Alembert, "as well as is possible in a dead language, and in French with a purity which was extraordinary for his time. This purity, which is to the present day admired by our skillful critics, renders his writings greatly superior to almost all of the same age; as the works of Messieurs de Port Royal are still distinguished on the same account from the barbarous rhapsodies of their opponents and contemporaries." Amidst the driest details of verbal criticism, there are frequent glimpses of that eloquence which De Thou and other great men regarded with admiration, and which, when aided by the living voice, must have told powerfully on his hearers.

It must be observed, however, that the Latin and French texts have been treated apart, as if they had not proceeded from the same pen, and have been separated by a broad line which meets the eye of the reader. The old translators sometimes proceeded as if they had not been aware of the vernacular copy, and at other times blended it with the original in so

strange a manner, that they appear to follow a path of their own, while they are faithfully tracking the Author's footsteps. In the new translations prepared for the Calvin Society, care has been taken to adhere scrupulously to the Latin text, and at the same time to give the English reader the full benefit of those illustrations which the Author thought fit to employ in submitting the work to the perusal of his countrymen. The French translation has been all along collated with the original; and whenever it contained additional matter, or removed obscurity by greater copiousness of language, or even when a striking phrase occurred, the passages have been exhibited and translated at the bottom of the page.

Notes, partly selected, but chiefly original, have been added. Some are intended to illustrate a remote allusion, to prevent a casual expression from being misunderstood, or to bring out more clearly the Author's meaning. Others are devoted to history, or to biblical criticism. Those which have been written by myself, and for which I must be held responsible, are marked. *Ed. All questions of a doctrinal nature have been excluded from these Notes.* The publications of the Calvin Translation Society are addressed to the whole Church of Christ, and ought not to wear the badge of any of the sections into which that Church is unhappily divided. In every thing that relates to doctrine the Author has been left in full possession of the field.

It will scarcely be supposed that every interpretation contained in this work has my entire concurrence. The great principles inculcated in the writings of Calvin have my cordial approbation; and, indeed, I could scarcely name a writer with whose views of Divine truth I more fully coincide. As a Commentator, ever since I became acquainted with him, I have been accustomed to assign to him the highest rank, and to receive his expositions with the deepest respect. My labors on this and on a former occasion[5] led me to examine his opinions more closely than before, and have raised him still more highly in my estimation. There are some points on which I feel assured that he mistook the meaning of Scripture; but almost all of them had been little investigated in his day, and do not appear to have been subjected to his usual severity of judgment. Many will wonder that he should contend so earnestly for the identity of John's baptism with Christ's baptism, instead of representing them to be two distinct ordinances, instituted for separate purposes, and placed under totally different regulations: but on this question the followers of Christ may agree to differ. It will excite more general surprise to find the great Reformer maintaining the right of the civil magistrate to punish heretics, and even to inflict on them the last sentence of the law. Men far inferior to him in learning and ability have avoided mistakes from which his powerful and enlightened mind was not exempted. They ought to regard with admiration and gratitude the conduct of a gracious Providence, which preserved his creed so remarkably free from Romish errors, and enabled him to approach so closely to the mind of the Holy Spirit.

5 Biblical Cabinet, vol. xxx.

A may be expected to resemble other works which bear the same title. Our Author's delight in brevity, and his extreme aversion to repeat what he had said before, would aid the influence of other reasons for adopting this plan, which are stated by himself towards the conclusion of *The Argument.* To meet one obvious disadvantage of this arrangement, a Table of the passages expounded, which may enable the reader easily to discover where the exposition is to be found, becomes necessary. Such a Table, together with a list of the passages taken from other books of Scripture which are quoted or illustrated in this work, and a copious Index to the subjects of which it treats, will be given in the Third volume.

The old translator of the Harmony, Eusebius Paget, deserves to be honored by the admirers of Calvin. It was indeed to be expected that, after the lapse of nearly three centuries, his version would be found unsuitable to modern taste. But it is highly creditable to his scholarship, and to his scrupulous fidelity to the original, for which his well known integrity, and his warm attachment to the writings of the Reformer, were a sufficient guarantee. His name has come down to us in connection with sermons and other works, which appear to have been much esteemed, but are now little known. "The History of the Bible, briefly collected, by way of Question and Answer," was one of his productions, and was printed at the end of several of the old editions of the Bible.

This volume is adorned by a well-authenticated likeness of the Reformer.[6] Many will be surprised to trace the lines of extreme old age in the countenance of one who died at the age of fifty-five. But all his biographers agree in stating that, ere he had concluded his fortieth year, the white locks, shrivelled features, and bent shoulders, bespoke Calvin to be already an old man;[7] and that long before other fifteen years had run their course, he seemed as if *threescore years and ten,* or rather *fourscore* years, had passed over him, and brought their usual attendants of *labor and sorrow, (*Psalm 90:10.) His friends observed with grief the

6 It is taken from a rare etching by *Pierre Woieiriot,* goldsmith, and engraver on copper and wood. This artist was born at Bar-le-duc in 1510. He was established at Lyons about the middle of the sixteenth century. His engravings are all distinguished by the monogram which may be observed on the etching itself, surmounted by the small cross of Lorraine. This engraving was issued previous to the death of Calvin, and probably during his last illness, as the likeness bears evident marks of premature decrepitude and debility.

7 A letter of Calvin to his dear friends, Farel and Viret, dated 30th May, 1540, *when he had not comp1eted his thirty-first year,* contains the following remarkable passage: "Car si nous voulons bien pourvoir aux profits de l'Eglise, il nous faut appeller a l'office de Pasteurs tels gens, qu'ils puissent quelque iour soustenir la charge apres nous. Combien que ie soye ieune, toutesfois quand ie voy ma debilite et indisposition de mon corps, i'ay soin de ceux qui seront apres nous, comme si i'estoye desia vieil." — "For if we are desirous to provide for the advantage of the Church, we must call to the office of Pastors such persons as may one day hold the office after us. *Though I am young,* yet when I perceive my debility and my bodily indisposition, I have anxiety about those who shall come after us, *as if I were already old.*"

forerunners of an event which, when it arrived, they could not but mourn as the premature close of a life so highly valued.

The quaint title-pages of two editions of the French version, together with the "Epistle Dedicatory" of Eusebius Paget, and a *fac-simile* of his title-page, immediately follow this Preface.

It may be proper to state, in conclusion, that, throughout this work, Calvin's own version of the three evangelists is adopted, as nearly as the difference of the languages would allow, in preference to our Authorized Version, which would not have rendered equal assistance to the reader in understanding the expositions. Yet the singular coincidence between the two Versions, interrupted chiefly by verbal differences which do not affect the sense, lends countenance to the suggestion of an esteemed friend and fellow-laborer, that King James's Translators have been more deeply indebted to the labors of Calvin than is generally believed.

W. P.
Auchterarder,
4th January, 1845.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY
TO THE OLD TRANSLATION
To the right honorable
FRANCIS, EARL OF BEDFORD,
Of the noble order of the garter, knight,
One of the lords of her majesty's most hon. Privy council;
Grace and peace from god, with the increase of that true
Honor which is from god, and lasteth for ever.

[*Prefixed to the Original English Translation, London,* 1584 *and* 1610.]

The choice (Right Honourable) which Luke the Evangelist made in dedicating this History of the Gospel, which he wrote, to that noble man Theophilus, and which that man of worthy memory, M. John Calvin, took in dedicating these his labors to the Lords of Frankfort, driveth me to dedicate this my small labor of translating this book into the English tongue. And though it is but little that I have done, in comparison of the labors of the other two, and not worth the offering to men of great estate; yet, lest that I should seem singular in dissenting from these two singular instruments in the Church of God, and that in one and the selfsame book I have presumed to make bold of your Lordship's name, hoping that your Honor will not mislike to have it written in the forehead of this book with noble Theophilus and the Lords of Frankfort; specially, sith that I do it in testimony of my dutiful love to you, for the manifold grace of God in you, and benefits which I have received from you. Men do commonly, in their Epistles, write either in the commendation of the work, or in the praise of their patron, or in discharging of themselves of the discredit which their enemies would lay upon them. But I crave pardon of your Honor, if, in studying to be short, I omit these things.

For, first, the very name of The Gospel of Jesus Christ and then the names of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Evangelists, and of M. Calvin, the gatherer of The Harmony and the writer of The Commentary, do yield more credit and commendation to the matter than all that I can say of it, all the days of my life. Only this I say of M. Calvin's labors here, that in my simple judgment it is one of the profitablest works for the Church that ever he did write.

Next, for your praises, as you like not to hear them, so I will not offend you in setting them down, nor give others occasion to condemn me of flattery. They which have best known you say, that you began a good course in your youth; that you witnessed a good confession in the late time of persecution; that your constancy hath been testified by your troubles at home and travels in foreign countries: You have continued your profession in the midst of your dignity, lordships, and living, left by your parents, and in the seat of government wherein our sovereign and most gracious Queen hath placed you; not falling asleep, in security, in this so peaceable a time.

My Lord, continue to the end, so shall you be safe. I speak not this as if it were your own strength that hath holden you up all this while; but meditate sometimes, I pray you, upon the seventy-first Psalm; and pray that Lord, as David did, who kept you in your youth, that He will keep you in your old age, now that your hair is hoar and hairs grey. And I beseech the mighty Lord to thrust them forward which are drawn back by their youthly affections, and to raise up them that fell away for fear of troubles, and to waken those which in this quiet and calm time do sleep in security, or wax wanton with the wealth of the world; that we may meet the Lord with true humility and earnest repentance, to see if He will be intreated to continue His mercies towards us; lest he turn his correcting rod, which he hath so oft shaken over us, into a devouting sword to consume us.

Of myself I will say nothing. The mouths of the wicked cannot be stopped. Their false tongues, I hope, shall teach me to walk warily; and I have learned, I thank my God, to pass through good report and through evil, and to commit myself and my cause to Him that judgeth right.

The Lord of lords preserve your Honour in safety, and multiply all spiritual blessings upon you and yours. From Kiltehampton, in Cornwall, this 28th of, January, 1584.

The Lord's most unworthy Minister, lame

Eusebius Paget

THE
AUTHOR'S EPISTLE DEDICATORY
TO
The Very Noble And Illustrious Lords,
THE BURGOMASTERS AND COUNCIL
OF THE NOBLE CITY OF FRANKFORT,
JOHN CALVIN

If virtuous examples were ever necessary to be held out for imitation, in order to stimulate lazy, sluggish, or inactive persons, the sloth, and—what is more—the indifference of this very corrupt age makes it necessary that the greater part of men, who do not of their own accord advance, but rather fall back, should at least be compelled by shame to discharge their duty. All, indeed, are seen to be influenced, both in public and in private, by a disgraceful emulation. There is not a king who does not labor to show that he is equal to his neighbors in the address, or perseverance, or energy, or courage, necessary for extending, by every possible method, the bounds of his dominion. There is not a state or commonwealth that yields the preference to others for cunning and all the arts of deception, nor a single individual among the ranks of the ambitious who will acknowledge his inferiority to others in wicked contrivances. In short, we would almost say that they had entered into a silent but mutual conspiracy to challenge each other to a contest of vices, and every man who carries wickedness to an extreme easily ruins a vast multitude by his example; so that, amidst the general prevalence of crimes, very few persons are to be found who exhibit a pattern of uprightness.

For these reasons I reckon it to be the more advantageous that those uncommon excellencies, by which eminent persons are distinguished, should receive the commendations which they deserve, and should be raised to an elevated situation so as to be seen at a great distance, that the desire of imitating them may be awakened in many breasts. And this I acknowledge, most honorable Lords, to be the principal reason why I am desirous that this work of mine should be given to the world under the sanction of your name. For though my undertaking will be regarded by me as having obtained a distinguished reward, if your readiness to do good shall derive from it any increase, yet I have had more particularly in my eye the other object which has been mentioned, namely, that others may equal your progress, or at least may follow the same course.

I have no intention, however, to frame a catalogue of all the excellencies by which you are distinguished, but shall satisfy myself for the present with mentioning, in terms of commendation, one excellence which has bound to you myself and a great number of the servants of Christ by what may be called a more sacred tie. It was a great matter that, more than five years ago, when all were seized with dreadful alarm, when a fearful devastation of the churches of Germany, and almost the destruction of the Gospel, was threatened by the

calamity which had occurred, you, on whom the first shower of darts fell, stood firm in an open profession of the faith which was at that time extremely odious, and steadily maintained the pure doctrine of godliness which you had embraced, so as to make it evident that, amidst the greatest anxieties and dangers, there is nothing which you value more highly than to fight under the banner of Christ. But it is still more remarkable, and more worthy of being put on record, that you not only maintain the pure worship of God among yourselves, and faithfully endeavor to keep your fellow-citizens within the fold of Christ, but that you collect as torn members those fragments of a dispersed church which had been thrown out in other countries.

In the present melancholy state of affairs, it has given me no small consolation to learn that devout worshippers of God, who had come to you as exiles from England and from other places, were received by you with warm hospitality; and that you not only opened your gates to them in their wretched exile, but rendered deserved honor to the Son of God, by making his Gospel to be distinctly heard in your city in foreign languages. A similar instance of distinguished kindness was recently showed to the unhappy natives of *Locarno* by the Council of Zurich, who not only threw open their city to them, (when they were not permitted to worship Christ at home according to their consciences) but even assigned to them a church for holding their religious assemblies, and were not prevented by a diversity of language from desiring to hear Christ talk Italian in their own city.

To return to yourselves: as soon as I heard that you had had the kindness to allow persons who speak our language to found a church amongst you, I considered that you had laid me under private obligations, and resolved to take this opportunity of testifying my gratitude. For while there is good reason for deploring the state of our nation to be such, that the sacrilegious tyranny of Popery has made a residence in our own country to be little else than a banishment from the kingdom of God, so, on the other hand, it is a distinguished favor to have a habitation granted to us on a foreign soil, where the lawful worship of God may be observed. This truly sacred hospitality—which was rendered not to men, but rather to Christ himself—will, I trust, add to your already prosperous condition fresh acts of the divine kindness, and secure them to you in uninterrupted succession.

For my own part at least, as I have just now declared, such were my inducements to dedicate to you this work of mine. It is a *Harmony arranged out of Three Evangelists,* and has been prepared by me with the greatest fidelity and diligence. What toil I have bestowed on it would serve no purpose to detail; and how far I have succeeded must be left to others to decide. The readers to whom I refer are those honest, learned, and well-disposed persons, whose desire of making progress is not retarded by a barbarous shame at receiving instruction, and who feel an interest in the public advantage. I do not trouble myself with mean and wicked scoundrels; and such I call not only the hooded monks, who, in defending the

tyranny of the Pope, carry on open war with us, but those useless drones[8] who, mixing with us, seize on every pretense for concealing their ignorance, and would wish to have the light of doctrine wholly extinguished. Let them impudently bark at me as much as they please: my reply will be always ready. Neither divine nor human obligation subjects me to the judgment of those who deserve the lash for their most disgraceful ignorance, as much as they deserve the whip for their obstinate and hardened malice and insolence.

I may be allowed at least to say, without the imputation of boasting, that I have faithfully endeavored to be of service to the Church of God. Two years ago, *John* was published along with my Commentary, which, I trust, was not without advantage. And thus like one of the heralds,[9] I have endeavored, to the utmost extent that my ability allowed, to do honor to Christ riding magnificently in his royal chariot drawn by four horses; and feel assured that candid readers, who have derived advantage from my labors, will not be ashamed to acknowledge that the success has, in some measure, corresponded to my wish. The evangelical history, related by four witnesses divinely appointed, is justly compared by me to a chariot drawn by four horses: for by this appropriate and just harmony God appears to have expressly prepared for his Son a triumphal chariot, from which he may make a magnificent display to the whole body of believers, and in which, with rapid progress, he may review the world. Augustine, too, makes an apt comparison of the Four Evangelists to trumpets, the sound of which fills every region of the world, so that the Church, gathered from the East, and West, and South, and North, flows into a holy unity of faith. So much the more intolerable is the curiosity of those who, not satisfied with the heavenly heralds, obtrude upon us, under the name of a Gospel, disgusting tales, which serve no other purpose than to pollute the purity of faith, and to expose the name of Christ to the sneers and ridicule of the ungodly.

With regard to yourselves, most noble Lords, as you detest every kind of leaven, by which the native purity of the Gospel is corrupted, and show that you have nothing more at heart than to defend and maintain the pure doctrine, as it was delivered by Christ, I feel assured that this production, which opens up the treasure of the Gospel, will receive your warmest approbation, and trust that my dedication of it to you will be accepted as a mark of my regard. Farewell, most illustrious Lords. May Christ always direct you by his Spirit, support you by his power, defend you by his protection, and enrich your city and commonwealth with all abundance of blessings.

Geneva, 1st August, M.D.LV.

8 "Mais aussi de ces vermines, lesquels meslez entre nous comme bourdons entre abeilles;" — "but likewise those wretches who mixing with us like drones among bees."

9 "Comme estant un de la compagnie de ceux qui vont devant pour faire place a leur Roy;" — "as being one of the company of those who go before to make way for their King."

THE ARGUMENT
ON THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST
ACCORDING TO MATTHEW, MARK, AND LUKE

In order to read with profit the Evangelical history, it is of great importance to understand the meaning of the word *Gospel.*[10] We shall thus be enabled to ascertain what design those heavenly witnesses had in writing, and to what object the events related by them must be referred. That their histories did not receive this name from others, but were so denominated by the Authors, is evident from Mark, who expressly says (1:1) that he relates *the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.* There is one passage in the writings of Paul, from which above all others a clear and certain definition of the word *Gospel* may be obtained, where he tells us that it ...

was promised by God in the Scriptures, through the prophets, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of sanctification, by the resurrection from the dead,

(Romans 1:2-4.)

First, this passage shows that the Gospel is a testimony of the revealed salvation, which had been formerly promised to the Fathers in an uninterrupted succession of ages. It points out, at the same time, a distinction between the *promises* which kept the hope of the people in suspense, and this joyful message, by which God declares that he has accomplished those things which he had formerly required them to expect.[11] In the same manner he states a little afterwards, that in the Gospel

the righteousness of God is openly manifested, which was testified by the Law and the Prophets, (Romans 3:21.)

The same apostle calls it, in another passage, an *Embassy* by which the reconciliation of the world to God, once accomplished by the death of Christ, is daily offered to men, (2 Corinthians 5:20.)

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10 *Evangelium* in Latin, *Evangile* in French, and *Evangell* in old English, are derived, with little alteration, from the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον, which is compounded of εὖ, *well,* and ἀγγελία, *a message,* and signifies *glad news.* The English word *Gospel is* of Saxon derivation, and is determined by its etymology to signify *God's word;* but must have acquired, at a very early period, the meaning of the Greek word for which it has been adopted as a translation. In the margin of the celebrated Geneva Testament, printed A.D. 1557, *Gospel* is thus defined: — "This worde signifieth good tidinges, and is taken here for the storie which conteineth the joyful message of the comming of the Sonne of God." — *Ed*

11 "Ce qu'il avoit auparavant commande a tous fideles d'attendre et esperer;" — "which he had formerly commanded all believers to expect and hope."

Secondly, Paul means not only that Christ is the pledge of all the blessings that God has ever promised, but that we have in him a full and complete exhibition of them; as he elsewhere declares that *all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen,* (2 Corinthians 1:20.) And, indeed, the freely bestowed adoption, by which we are made sons of God, as it proceeds from the good pleasure which the Father had from eternity, has been revealed to us in this respect, that Christ (who alone is the Son of God by nature) has clothed himself with our flesh, and made us his brethren. That satisfaction by which sins are blotted out, so that we are no longer under the curse and the sentence of, death, is to be found nowhere else than in the sacrifice of his death. Righteousness, and salvation, and perfect happiness, are founded on his resurrection.

The *Gospel,* therefore, is a public exhibition of the Son of God *manifested in the flesh,* (1 Timothy 3:16,) to deliver a ruined world, and to restore men from death to life. It is justly called a *good* and *joyful message,* for it contains perfect happiness. Its object is to commence the reign of God, and by means of our deliverance from the corruption of the flesh, and of our renewal by the Spirit, to conduct us to the heavenly glory. For this reason it is often called *the kingdom of heaven,* and the restoration to a blessed life, which is brought to us by Christ, is sometimes called *the kingdom of God:* as when Mark says that *Joseph waited for the kingdom of God,* (Mark 15:43,) he undoubtedly refers to the coming of the Messiah.

Hence it is evident that the word *Gospel* applies properly to the New Testament, and that those writers are chargeable with a want of precision,[12] who say that it was common to all ages, and who suppose that the Prophets, equally with the Apostles, were ministers of the Gospel. Widely different is the account which Christ gives us, when he says, that

> the law and the prophets were till John, and that since that time the kingdom of God began to be preached, (Luke 16:16.)

Mark, too, as we mentioned a little ago, declares that the preaching of John was *the beginning of the Gospel,* (John 1:1.) Again, the four histories, which relate how Christ discharged the office of Mediator, have with great propriety received this designation. As the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ contain the whole of our salvation, and are therefore the peculiar subject of the *Gospel,* the name of *Evangelists* is justly and suitably applied to those who place before our eyes Christ who has been sent by the Father, that our faith may acknowledge him to be the Author of a blessed life.

The power and results of his coming are still more fully expressed in other books of the New Testament. And even in this respect John differs widely from the other three Evangelists: for he is almost wholly occupied in explaining the power of Christ, and the advantages which we derive from him; while they insist more fully on one point, that our Christ is that Son of God who had been promised to be the Redeemer of the world. They interweave, no doubt,

12 "Que c'est aucunement confondre les termes;" — "that it is in a manner a confounding of words."

the doctrine which relates to the office of Christ, and inform us what is the nature of his grace, and for what purpose he has been given to us; but they are principally employed, as I have said, in showing that in the person of Jesus Christ has been fulfilled what God had promised from the beginning.[13] They had no intention or design to abolish by their writings *the law and the prophets;* as some fanatics dream that the Old Testament is superfluous, now that the truth of heavenly wisdom has been revealed to us by Christ and his Apostles. On the contrary, they point with the finger to Christ, and admonish us to seek from him whatever is ascribed to him by *the law and the prophets.* The full profit and advantage, therefore, to be derived from the reading of the Gospel will only be obtained when we learn to connect it with the ancient promises.

With regard to the three writers of the Evangelical history, whom I undertake to expound, *Matthew* is sufficiently known. *Mark* is generally supposed to have been the private friend and disciple of Peter. It is even believed that he wrote the Gospel, as it was dictated to him by Peter, and thus merely performed the office of an amanuensis or clerk.[14] But on this subject we need not give ourselves much trouble, for it is of little importance to us, provided only we believe that he is a properly qualified and divinely appointed witness, who committed nothing to writing, but as the Holy Spirit directed him and guided his pen. There is no ground whatever for the statement of Jerome, that his Gospel is an abridgment of the Gospel by Matthew. He does not everywhere adhere to the order which Matthew observed, and from the very commencement handles the subjects in a different manner. Some things, too, are related by him which the other had omitted, and his narrative of the same event is sometimes more detailed. It is more probable, in my opinion — and the nature of the case warrants the conjecture — that he had not seen Matthew's book when he wrote his own; so far is he from having expressly intended to make an abridgment.

I have the same observation to make respecting *Luke:* for we will not say that the diversity which we perceive in the three Evangelists was the object of express arrangement, but as they intended to give an honest narrative of what they knew to be certain and undoubted, each followed that method which he reckoned best. Now as this did not happen by chance, but by the direction of Divine Providence, so under this diversity in the manner of writing the Holy Spirit suggested to them an astonishing harmony, which would almost be sufficient of itself to secure credit to them, if there were not other and stronger evidences to support their authority.

Luke asserts plainly enough that he is the person who attended Paul. But it is a childish statement which Eusebius makes, that Paul is the Author of the Gospel which bears the

13 "Des le commencement du monde;" — "from the beginning of the world."

14 "En sorte qu il ait seulement este escrivain sous luy;" — "so that he was only a writer under him."

name of Luke, because in one passage he mentions *his Gospel,*[15] (2 Timothy 2:8.) As if what follows did not make it clear that Paul is speaking of his whole preaching, and not of a single book: for he adds, *for which I suffer trouble, even to bonds,* (2 Timothy 2:9.) Now, it is certain that he was not held guilty[16] of having written a book, but of having administered and preached with the living voice the doctrine of Christ. Eusebius, whose industry was great, discovers here a singular want of judgment in collecting without discrimination such gross absurdities. On this head I have thought it necessary to warn my readers, that they may not be shocked at fooleries of the same description which occur in every part of his history.

Of that method of interpretation which I have chosen to adopt, and which it may be many persons, at first sight, will not approve, it will be proper to give some account for the satisfaction of pious and candid readers. First, it is beyond all dispute, that it is impossible to expound, in a proper and successful manner, any one of the Evangelists, without comparing him with the other two; and, accordingly, faithful and learned commentators spend a very great portion of their labor on reconciling the narratives of the three Evangelists. But as it frequently happens that persons of ordinary abilities find the comparison to be no easy matter, when it is necessary to pass at every turn from the one to the other, I thought that it might prove to be a seasonable and useful abridgment of their labor, if I were to arrange the three histories in one unbroken chain, or in a single picture, in which the reader may perceive at a glance the resemblance or diversity that exists. In this way I shall leave out nothing that has been written by any of the three Evangelists; and whatever may be found in more than one of them will be collected into one place.

Whether or not I have succeeded to my expectation, the reader must decide by his own experience. So far from claiming the praise of having brought out something new, I readily acknowledge, as becomes an honest man, that I have adopted this method in imitation of others. *Bucer, a* man of revered memory, and an eminent teacher of the Church of God, who above all others appears to me to have labored successfully in this field, has been especially my model. As he availed himself of the labors of the ancients who had traveled this road before him, so my toils have been not a little alleviated by his industry and application. Where I use the liberty of differing from him, (which I have freely done, whenever it was necessary,) Bucer himself, if he were still an inhabitant of the earth, would not be displeased.

15 "Se fondant sur une passage ou il fait mention de son Evangile;" — "founding on a passage in which he makes mention of his Gospel," *(according to my gospel.)*

16 "Il n'avoit este accuse, et emprisonne;" — "he was not accused and imprisoned."

COMMENTARY
ON A
HARMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS
LUKE 1:1-4

Luke 1:1-4

1. Forasmuch as many have undertaken to compose a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, **2**. Even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word; **3**. It seemed good to me also, having carefully examined all things from the beginning, to write to thee in detail, most excellent Theophilus, **4**. That thou mayest acknowledge the certainty of those things whereof thou hast been instructed.

Luke is the only Evangelist who makes a preface to his Gospel, for the purpose of explaining briefly the motive which induced him to write. By addressing a single individual he may appear to have acted foolishly, instead of sounding the trumpet aloud, as was his duty, and inviting all men to believe. It appears, therefore, to be unsuitable that the doctrine which does not peculiarly belong to one person or to another, but is common to all, should be privately sent to his friend Theophilus. Hence some have been led to think that *Theophilus is* an appellative noun, and is applied to all godly persons on account of their *love of God;* but the epithet which is joined to it is inconsistent with that opinion. Nor is there any reason for dreading the absurdity which drove them to adopt such an expedient. For it is not less true that *Paul's* doctrine belongs to all, though some of his Epistles were addressed to certain cities, and others to certain men. Nay, we must acknowledge, if we take into account the state of those times, that Luke adopted a conscientious and prudent course. There were tyrants on every hand who, by terror and alarm, were prepared to obstruct the progress of sound doctrine. This gave occasion to Satan and his ministers for spreading abroad the clouds of error, by which the pure light would be obscured. Now, as the great body of men cared little about maintaining the purity of the Gospel, and few considered attentively the inventions of Satan or the amount of danger that lurked under such disguises, every one who excelled others by uncommon faith, or by extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, was the more strongly bound to do his utmost, by care and industry, for preserving the doctrine of godliness pure and uncontaminated from every corruption. Such persons were chosen by God to be the sacred keepers of the law, by whom the heavenly doctrine committed to them should be honestly handed down to posterity. With this view therefore, Luke dedicates his Gospel to Theophilus, that he might undertake the faithful preservation of it; and the same duty Paul enjoins and recommends to Timothy, (2 Timothy 1:14; 3:14.)

1. *Forasmuch as many.* He assigns a reason for writing which, one would think, ought rather to have dissuaded him from writing. To compose a history, which had already employed many authors, was unnecessary labor, at least if they had faithfully discharged their duty. But no accusation of imposture, or carelessness, or any other fault, is in the slightest degree insinuated. It looks, therefore, as if he were expressing a resolution to do what had

been already done. I reply, though he deals gently with those who had written before him, he does not altogether approve of their labors. He does not expressly say that they had written on matters with which they were imperfectly acquainted, but by laying claim to certainty as to the facts, he modestly denies their title to full and unshaken confidence. It may be objected that, if they made false statements, they ought rather to have been severely censured. I reply again, they may not have been deeply in fault; they may have erred more from want of consideration than from malice; and, consequently, there would be no necessity for greater fierceness of attack. And certainly there is reason to believe that these were little more than historical sketches which, though comparatively harmless at the time, would afterwards, if they had not been promptly counteracted, have done serious injury to the faith. But it is worthy of remark that, in applying this remedy through Luke to unnecessary writings, God had a wonderful design in view of obtaining, by universal consent, the rejection of others, and thus securing undivided credit to those which reflect brightly his adorable majesty. There is the less excuse for those silly people, by whom disgusting stories, under the name of Nicodemus, or some other person, are, at the present day, palmed upon the world.

Are most surely believed among us The participle πεπληροφορημένα, which Luke employs, denotes things fully ascertained, and which do not admit of doubt. The old translator has repeatedly fallen into mistakes about this word, and through that ignorance has given us a corrupted sense of some very beautiful passages. One of these occurs in the writings of Paul, where he enjoins every man to be fully persuaded in his own mind, (Romans 14:5,) that conscience may not hesitate and waver, tossed to and fro (Ephesians 4:14) by doubtful opinions. Hence, too, is derived the word πληροφορία, which he erroneously renders *fullness,* while it denotes that strong conviction springing from faith, in which godly minds safely rest. There is still, as I have said, an implied contrast; for, by claiming for himself the authority of a faithful witness, he destroys the credit of others who give contrary statements.

Among us[17] has the same meaning as *with us.*[18] He appears to make faith rest on a weak foundation, its relation to men, while it ought to rest on the Word of God only; and certainly the *full assurance* (πληροφορία) of faith is ascribed to the sealing of the Spirit, (1 Thessalonians 1:5; Hebrews 10:22.) I reply, if the Word of God does not hold the first rank, faith will not be satisfied with any human testimonies, but, where the inward confirmation of the Spirit has already taken place, it allows them some weight in the historical knowledge of facts. By historical knowledge I mean that knowledge which we obtain respecting events, either by our own observation or by the statement of others. For, with respect to the visible works of God, it is equally proper to listen to *eye-witnesses* as to rely on experience. Besides,

17 Inter nos.

18 Apud nos.

those whom Luke follows were not private authors, but were also *ministers of the Word* By this commendation he exalts them above the rank of human authority; for he intimates that the persons from whom he received his information had been divinely authorized to preach the Gospel. Hence, too, that security which he shortly afterwards mentions, and which, if it does not rest upon God, may soon be disturbed. There is great weight in his denominating those from whom he received his Gospel *ministers of the Word;* for on that ground believers conclude that the witnesses are beyond all exception, as the Lawyers express it, and cannot lawfully be set aside.

Erasmus, who has borrowed from Virgil[19] a phrase used in his version, did not sufficiently consider the estimation and weight due to a Divine calling. Luke does not talk in a profane style, but enjoins us in the person of his friend Theophilus to keep in view the command of Christ, and to hear with reverence the Son of God speaking through his Apostles. It is a great matter that he affirms them to have been *eye-witneses,* but, by calling them *ministers,* he takes them out of the common order of men, that our faith may have its support in heaven and not in earth. In short, Luke's meaning is this: "that, since thou now hast those things committed faithfully to writing which thou hadst formerly learned by oral statements, thou mayest place a stronger reliance on the received doctrine." It is thus evident that God has employed every method to prevent our faith from being suspended on the doubtful and shifting opinions of men. There is the less room for excusing the ingratitude of the world, which, as if it openly preferred the uncertainty arising out of vague and unfounded reports, turns from so great a Divine favor with loathing. But let us attend to the remarkable distinction which our Lord has laid down, that foolish credulity may not insinuate itself under the name of faith. Meanwhile, let us allow the world to be allured, as it deserves, by the deceitful baits of foolish curiosity, and even to surrender itself willingly to the delusions of Satan.

3. *Having carefully examined all things* The old translator has it, *having followed out all things;*[20] and the Greek verb παρακολουθεῖν is taken metaphorically from those who tread in the footsteps of others, that nothing may escape them. So that Luke intended to express his close and laborious investigation, just as Demosthenes employs the same word, when, in examining an embassy against which he brings an accusation, he boasts of his diligence to have been such, that he perceived every thing that had been done as well as if he had been a spectator.

19 Quorum pars magna fui. — *Virg. AEn.*

20 Omnia assequuto.

LUKE 1:5-13

Luke 1:5-13
5. In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth. **6**. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. **7**. And they had no child, because Elisabeth was barren, and they were now both at an advanced age. **8**. And it happened, while he was discharging the priest's office in the order of his course before God, **9**. According to the custom of the priest's office, it fell to him by lot to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. **10**. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense. **11**. And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right hand of the altar on which the incense was burning. **12**. And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him. **13**. But the angel said to him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard: and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

Luke very properly begins his Gospel with John the Baptist, just as a person who was going to speak about the daylight would commence with the dawn. For, like the dawn, he went before the Sun of Righteousness, which was shortly to arise. Others also mention him, but they bring him forward as already discharging his office. Luke secures our respect for him, while he is yet unborn, by announcing the miracles of divine power which took place at the earliest period of his existence, and by showing that he had a commission from heaven to be a prophet, ere it was possible for men to know what would be his character. His object was that John might afterwards be heard with more profound veneration, when he should come forth invested with a public office to exhibit the glory of Christ.

5. *In the days of Herod* This was the son of Antipater, whom his father elevated to the throne, and labored with such assiduity and toil to advance, that he was afterwards surnamed Herod *the Great* Some think that he is here mentioned by Luke, because he was their first foreign king; and that this was a suitable time for their deliverance, because the scepter had passed into a different nation. But they who speak in this manner do not correctly understand Jacob's prophecy, (Genesis 49:10,) in which the advent of the Messiah is promised not merely after the royal authority had been taken from the Jews, but after it had been removed from the tribe of Judah. The holy patriarch did not even intimate that the tribe of Judah would be stripped of its supremacy, but that the government of the people would steadily remain in it until Christ, in whose person its permanency would at length be secured. When the Maccabees flourished, the tribe of Judah was reduced nearly to a private rank; and shortly afterwards, John, the latest leader of that race, was slain. But even at that time, its power was

not completely annihilated; for there still remained the Sanhedrim, or Council selected out of the family and descendants of David, which possessed great authority, and lasted till the time of Herod, who, by a shocking slaughter of the judges, revenged the punishment formerly inflicted on himself, when he was condemned for murder, and forced to undergo voluntary exile, in order to escape capital punishment.

It was not, therefore, because he was of foreign extraction, that the reign of Herod broke the scepter of the tribe of Judah, (Genesis 49:10;) but because whatever relics of superior rank still lingered in that tribe were entirely carried off by his robbery. That its royal dignity had crumbled down long before, and that by slow degrees its supremacy had nearly given way, does not imply such a discontinuance as to be at variance with Jacob's prophecy. For God had promised two things seemingly opposite; that *the throne of David* would be eternal, (Psalm 89:29, 36,) and that, after it had been destroyed, he would raise up its ruins, (Amos 9:11;) that the sway of his kingly power would be eternal, and yet that there should come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, (Isaiah 11:1.) Both must be fulfilled. That supremacy, therefore, which God had bestowed on the tribe of Judah, was suffered by him to be broken down for a time, that the attention of the people might be more strongly directed to the expectation of Christ's reign. But when the destruction of the Sanhedrim appeared to have cut off the hope of believers, suddenly the Lord shone forth. Now, it belongs to the arrangement of history to mark the date of the transaction; but for no light reason did the word *king* mark, at the same time, the wretchedness of that period, in order to remind the Jews, that their eyes ought now to be turned to the Messiah, if they would sincerely keep the covenant of God.

Zacharias, of the course of Abia We learn from sacred history, (1 Chronicles 24:3, 31,) that the families of the priests were arranged by David in certain classes. In this matter David attempted nothing contrary to what the law enjoined. God had bestowed the priesthood on Aaron and his sons, (Exodus 28:1.) The other Levites were set apart to inferior offices, (Numbers 3:9.) David made no change in this respect; but his object was, partly to secure that nothing should be done in tumult and disorder, partly to oppose ambition, and at the same time to provide that it should not be in the power of a few persons, by taking the whole service into their own hands, to leave the greater number unemployed at home. Now in that arrangement, *Abijah,* son of Eleazar, held the eighth rank, (1 Chronicles 24:10.) Zacharias, therefore, belonged to the priestly family, and to the posterity of Eleazar who had succeeded his father in the high priest's office, (Numbers 20:28.) In what manner Elisabeth, who was of the daughters of Aaron, could be Mary's *cousin,* (v. 36,) I will explain in the proper place. It is certainly by way of respect that Luke mentions the genealogy of Elisabeth; for Zacharias was permitted by the law to take to wife a daughter of any private Levite. From the equal marriage, therefore, it is evident that he was a man respected among his own rank.

6. *And they were both righteous before God* He awards to them a noble testimony, not only that among men they spent holy and upright lives, but also that they were *righteous before God* This *righteousness* Luke defines briefly by saying that they *walked in all the commandments of God* Both ought to be carefully observed; for, although praise is bestowed on Zacharias and Elisabeth for the purpose of showing us that the lamp, whose light went before the Son of God, was taken not from an obscure house, but from an illustrious sanctuary, yet their example exhibits to us, at the same time, the rule of a devout and righteous life. In ordering our life, (Psalm 37:23,) therefore, our first study ought to be to approve ourselves to God; and we know that what he chiefly requires is a sincere heart and a pure conscience. Whoever neglects uprightness of heart, and regulates his outward life only by obedience to the law, neglects this order. For it ought to be remembered that the heart, and not the outward mask of works, is chiefly regarded by God, to whom we are commanded to look. Obedience occupies the second rank; that is, no man must frame for himself, at his own pleasure, a new form of righteousness unsupported by the Word of God, but we must allow ourselves to be governed by divine authority. Nor ought we to neglect this definition, that they are *righteous* who regulate their life by the *commandments* of the law; which intimates that, to the eye of God, all acts of worship are counterfeit, and the course of human life false and unsettled, so far as they depart from his law.

Commandments and *ordinances* differ thus. The latter term relates strictly to exercises of piety and of divine worship; the latter is more general, and extends both to the worship of God and to the duties of charity. For the Hebrew word ⊠⊠⊠, which signifies statutes or decrees, is rendered by the Greek translator δικαιώματα, *ordinances;* and in Scripture ⊠⊠⊠ usually denotes those services which the people were accustomed to perform in the worship of God and in the profession of their faith. Now, though hypocrites, in that respect, are very careful and exact, they do not at all resemble Zacharias and Elisabeth. For the sincere worshippers of God, such as these two were, do not lay hold on naked and empty ceremonies, but, eagerly bent on the truth, they observe them in a spiritual manner. Unholy and hypocritical persons, though they bestow assiduous toil on outward ceremonies, are yet far from observing them as they are enjoined by the Lord, and, consequently, do but lose their labor. In short, under these two words Luke embraces the whole law.

But if, in keeping the law, Zacharias and Elisabeth were blameless, they had no need of the grace of Christ; for a full observance of the law brings life, and, where there is no transgression of it, there is no remaining guilt. I reply, those magnificent commendations, which are bestowed on the servants of God, must be taken with some exception. For we ought to consider in what manner God deals with them. It is according to the covenant which he has made with them, the first clause of which is a free reconciliation and daily pardon, by which he forgives their sins. They are accounted *righteous* and *blameless,* because their whole life testifies that they are devoted to righteousness, that the fear of God dwells in them, so long

as they give a holy example. But as their pious endeavors fall very far short of perfection, they cannot please God without obtaining pardon. The righteousness which is commended in them depends on the gracious forbearance of God, who does not reckon to them their remaining unrighteousness. In this manner we must explain whatever expressions are applied in Scripture to the righteousness of men, so as not to overturn the forgiveness of sins, on which it rests as a house does on its foundation. Those who explain it to mean that Zacharias and Elisabeth were righteous by faith, simply because they freely obtained the favor of God through the Mediator, torture and misapply the words of Luke. With respect to the subject itself, they state a part of the truth, but not the whole. I do own that the righteousness which is ascribed to them ought to be regarded as obtained, not by the merit of works, but by the grace of Christ; and yet, because the Lord has not imputed to them their sins, he has been pleased to bestow on their holy, though imperfect life, the appellation of *righteousness* The folly of the Papists is easily refuted. With the righteousness of faith they contrast this righteousness, which is ascribed to Zacharias, which certainly springs from the former, and, therefore, must be subject, inferior, and, to use a common expression, subordinate to it, so that there is no collision between them. The false coloring, too which they give to a single word is pitiful. *Ordinances,* they tell us, are called *commandments* of the law, and, therefore, they justify us. As if we asserted that true righteousness is not laid down in the law, or complained that its instruction is in fault for not justifying us, and not rather that it is weak through our flesh, (Romans 8:3.) In the commandments of God, as we have a hundred times acknowledged, life is contained, (Leviticus 18:5; Matthew 19:17;) but this will be of no avail to men, who by nature were altogether opposed to the law, and, now that they are regenerated by the Spirit of God, are still very far from observing it in a perfect manner.

7. *And they had no child* By an extraordinary purpose of God it was appointed that John should be born out of the common and ordinary course of nature. The same thing happened with Isaac, (Genesis 17:17; Genesis 21:1-3,) in whom God had determined to give an uncommon and remarkable demonstration of his favor. Elisabeth had been barren in the prime of life, and now she is in old age, which of itself shuts up the womb. By two hinderances, therefore, the Lord gives a twofold, surprising exhibition of his power, in order to testify, by stretching out his hand, as it were, from heaven, that the Prophet was sent by himself, (Malachi 3:1; John 1:6.) He is indeed a mortal man, born of earthly parents; but a supernatural method, so to speak, recommends him strongly as if he had fallen from heaven

9. *According to the custom of the priest's office* The law enjoined that incense should be offered twice every day, that is, every morning and at even, (Exodus 30:7, 8.) The order of courses among the priests had been appointed by David, as we have already explained; and, consequently, what is here stated as to incense was expressly enjoined by the law of God. The other matters had been arranged by David, (1 Chronicles 24:3,) that each family might

have its own turn, though David ordained nothing which was not prescribed by the law: he only pointed out a plan by which they might individually perform the service which God had commanded.

The word *temple* (νὰος) is here put for the *holy place;* which deserves attention, for it sometimes includes the outer court. Now, Zacharias is spoken of as going into the temple, which none but priests were permitted to enter. And so Luke says that the people stood *without,* there being a great distance between them and the altar of incense; for the altar on which the sacrifices were offered intervened. It ought to be observed also that Luke says *before God:* for whenever the priest entered into the holy place, he went, as it were, into the presence of God, that he might be a mediator between him and the people. For it was the will of the Lord to have this impressed upon his people, that no mortal is allowed to have access to heaven, without a priest going before; nay that, so long as men live on the earth, they do not approach the heavenly throne, so as to find favor there, but in the person of the Mediator. Now, as there were many priests, there were not two of them permitted to discharge, at the same time, the solemn office of intercession for the people; but they were so arranged in classes, that only one entered the Holy Place, and thus there was but one priest at a time. The design of the incense was to remind believers that the sweet savor of their prayers does not ascend to heaven except through the sacrifice of the Mediator; and in what manner those figures apply to us must be learned from the Epistle to the Hebrews.

12. *Zacharias was troubled* Though God does not appear to his servants for the purpose of terrifying them, yet it is advantageous and even necessary for them to be struck with awe, (Psalm 33:8,) that, amidst their agitation, they may learn to give to God the glory due unto his name, (Psalm 29:2.) Nor does Luke relate only that Zacharias was terrified, but adds that *fear fell upon him;* intimating that he was so alarmed as to give way to terror. The presence of God fills men with alarm, which not only leads them to reverence, but humbles the pride of the flesh, naturally so insolent that they never submit themselves to God until they have been overcome by violence. Hence, too, we infer that it is only when God is absent, — or, in other words, when they withdraw from his presence, — that they indulge in pride and self-flattery; for if they had God as a Judge before their eyes, they would at once and unavoidably fall prostrate. And if at the sight of an angel, who is but a spark of the Divine light, this happened to Zacharias, on whom the commendation of *righteousness* is bestowed, what shall become of us miserable creatures, if the majesty of God shall overwhelm us with its brightness? We are taught by the example of the holy fathers that those only are impressed with a lively sense of the Divine presence who shake and tremble at beholding him, and that those are stupid and insensible who hear his voice without alarm.

13. *Fear not, Zacharias* The glory of God, it ought to be observed, is not so appalling to the saints as to swallow them up entirely with dread, but only to cast them down from a foolish confidence, that they may behold him with humility. As soon, therefore, as God has

abased the pride of the flesh in those who believe in him, he stretches out his hand to raise them up. He acts differently towards the reprobate; for at whatever time they are dragged before the tribunal of God, they are overwhelmed by absolute despair: and thus does God justly reward their vain delights, in which they give themselves up to the intoxicating wantonness of sin. We ought, therefore, to accept this consolation, with which the angel soothes Zacharias, that we have no reason to fear, when God is gracious to us. For they are greatly mistaken who, in order to enjoy peace, hide themselves from the face of God, whereas we ought to acquaint ourselves with him and be at peace, (Job 22:21.)

Thy prayer is heard Zacharias may seem to have acted an improper part, and inconsistent with the nature of his office, if, on entering the Holy Place in the name of all the people, he prayed as a private man that he might obtain offspring; for, when the priest sustained a public character, he ought, in forgetfulness as it were of himself, to offer prayers for the general welfare of the Church. If we say that there was no absurdity in Zacharias, after performing the chief part of the prayer, devoting the second part of it to private meditations about himself, the reply will not be without weight. But it is hardly probable that Zacharias did, at that time, pray to obtain a son, of which he had despaired on account of his wife's advanced age; nor indeed can any precise moment be drawn from the words of the angel. I interpret it, therefore, simply that his prayer was at length heard, which he had poured out before God for a long period. That the desire of having children, if it be not excessive, is consistent with piety and holiness, may be gathered from Scripture, which assigns to it not the lowest place among the blessings of God.

Thou shalt call his name John The name was given, I think, to the Baptist in order to heighten the authority of his office. ⊠⊠⊠⊠⊠, (1 Chronicles 3:15,) for which the Greeks employ Ἰωάννης, signifies in Hebrew *the grace of the Lord* Many suppose that the son of Zacharias was so called, because he was beloved of God. I rather think that it was intended to recommend not the grace which God bestowed upon him as a private individual, but that grace which his mission would bring to all. The force and weight of the name are increased by its date; for it was before he was born that God inscribed on him this token of his favor.

Luke 1:14-17

Luke 1:14-17
14. And he shall be to thee joy and exultation, and many shall rejoice on account of his birth. **15**. For he shall be great before the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. **16**. And many of the children of Israel shall he bring back to the Lord their God. **17**. And he shall go before him with the spirit and power of Elijah, that he may bring back the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, that he may make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

14. *He shall be to thee joy* The angel describes a greater joy than what Zacharias could derive from the recent birth of a child; for he informs him that he would have such a son as he had not even ventured to wish. He even proceeds farther to state that the joy would not be domestic, enjoyed by the parents alone, or confined within private walls, but shared alike by strangers, to whom the advantage of his birth should be made known. It is as if the angel had said that a son would be born not to Zacharias alone, but would be the Teacher and Prophet of the whole people. The Papists have abused this passage for the purpose of introducing a profane custom in celebrating the birth-day of John. I pass over the disorderly scene of a procession accompanied by dancing and leaping, and licentiousness of every description, strangely enough employed in observing a day which they pretend to hold sacred, and even the amusements authorized on that day taken from magical arts and diabolical tricks, closely resembling the mysteries of the goddess Ceres. It is enough for me, at present, to show briefly that they absurdly torture the words of the angel to mean the annual joy of a birth-day, while the angel restricts his commendation to that joy which all godly persons would derive from the advantage of his instruction. They rejoiced that a prophet was born to them, by whose ministry they were led to the hope of salvation,

15. *For he shall be great* He confirms what he said *about joy,* for John had been selected for a great and extraordinary purpose. These words are not so much intended to extol his eminent virtues as to proclaim his great and glorious office; as Christ, when he declares that *among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist,* (Matthew 11:11,) refers less to the holiness of his life than to his ministry. What follows immediately afterwards, *he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink,* must not be understood to mean that John's abstemiousness was a singular virtue, but that God was pleased to distinguish his servant by this visible token, by which the world would acknowledge him to be a continual Nazarite. The priests too abstained from wine and strong drink, while they were performing their duties in the temple, (Leviticus 10:9.) The same abstinence was enjoined on the Nazarites, (Numbers 6:3,) until their vow should be fulfilled. By a striking mark God

showed that John was dedicated to him to be a Nazarite for his whole life, as we learn was also the case with Samson, (Judges 13:3, 4.) But we must not on this ground imagine that the worship of God consists in abstinence from wine, as apish copyists select some part of the actions of the fathers for an object of imitation. Only let all practice temperance, let those who conceive it to be injurious to drink wine abstain of their own accord, and let those who have it not endure the want with contentment. As to the word σίκερα, I fully agree with those who think that, like the Hebrew word ⌧⌧⌧, it denotes any sort of manufactured wine.

He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost These words, I think, convey nothing more than that John would manifest such a disposition as would hold out the hope of future greatness. By disposition I mean not such as is found even in ungodly men, but what corresponds to the excellence of his office. The meaning is, the power and grace of the Spirit will appear in him not only when he shall enter upon his public employment, but even from the womb he shall excel in the gifts of the Spirit, which will be a token and pledge of his future character. *From the womb,* means from his earliest infancy. The power of the Spirit, I acknowledge, did operate in John, while he was yet in his mother's womb; but here, in my opinion, the angel meant something else, that John, even when a child, would be brought forward to the public gaze, accompanied by extraordinary commendation of the grace of God. As to *fullness,* there is no occasion for entering into the subtle disputations, or rather the trifling, of the sophists; for Scripture conveys nothing more by this word than the pre-eminent and very uncommon abundance of the gifts of the Spirit. We know, that to Christ alone the Spirit was given without measure, (John 3:34,) that we may draw out of his fullness, (John 1:16;) while to others it is distributed according to a fixed measure, (1 Corinthians 12:11; Ephesians 4:7.) But those who are more plentifully endued with grace beyond the ordinary capacity, are said to be full of the Holy Ghost. Now, as the more plentiful influence of the Spirit was in John an extraordinary gift of God, it ought to be observed that the Spirit is not bestowed on all from their very infancy, but only when it pleases God. John bore from the womb a token of future rank. Saul, while tending the herd, remained long without any mark of royalty, and, when at length chosen to be king, was suddenly turned into another man, (1 Samuel 10:6.) Let us learn by this example that, from the earliest infancy to the latest old age, the operation of the Spirit in men is free.

16. *And many of the children of Israel shall he bring back* These words show the shamefully dissolute conduct which then prevailed in the Church, for those in whom conversion to God could take place must have been apostates. And certainly corrupt doctrine, depraved morals, and disorderly government, were such as to render it next to a miracle that a very few continued in godliness. But if the ancient Church was so awfully dissolute, it is a frivolous pretext by which the Papists defend their own superstitions, that it is impossible for the Church to err, particularly since they include under this designation not the genuine and elect children of God, but the crowd of the ungodly.

But John appears to have more ascribed to him here than belongs to man. For conversion to God renews men to a spiritual life, and therefore is not only God's own work, but surpasses even the creation of men. In this way ministers might seem to be made equal, and even superior, to God viewed as Creator; since to be born again to a heavenly life is a greater work than to be born as mortals on the earth. The answer is easy; for when the Lord bestows so great praise on the outward doctrine, he does not separate it from the secret influence of his Spirit. As God chooses men to be his ministers whose services he employs for the edification of his Church, he at the same time operates by them, through the secret influence of his Spirit, that their labors may be efficacious and fruitful. Wherever Scripture applauds this efficacy in the ministry of men, let us learn to attribute it to the grace of the Spirit, without which the voice of man would have spent itself uselessly in the air. Thus, when Paul boasts that he is a minister of the Spirit, (2 Corinthians 3:6,) he claims nothing separately for himself, as if by his voice he penetrated into the hearts of men, but asserts the power and grace of the Spirit in his ministry. These expressions are worthy of remark; because Satan labors, with amazing contrivance, to lower the effect of doctrine, in order that the grace of the Spirit connected with it may be weakened. The outward preaching, I acknowledge, can do nothing separately or by itself; but as it is an instrument of divine power for our salvation, and through the grace of the spirit an efficacious instrument, *what God hath joined together let us not put asunder,* (Matthew 19:6.)

That the glory of conversion and faith, on the other hand, may remain undivided with God alone, Scripture frequently reminds us that ministers are nothing in themselves; but in such cases he compares them with *God,* that no one may wickedly steal the honor from God and convey it to them. In short, those whom God, by the aid of the minister, converts to himself, are said to be converted by the minister, because he is nothing more than the hand of God; and both are expressly asserted in this passage. Of the efficacy of the doctrine we have now said enough. That it lies not in the will and power of the minister to bring men back to God, we conclude from this that John did not indiscriminately bring all back, (which he would unquestionably have done, if every thing had yielded to his wish,) but only brought those back whom it pleased the Lord effectually to call. In a word, what is here taught by the angel is laid down by Paul in his Epistle to the Romans, that faith cometh by hearing, (Romans 10:17,) but that those only to whom the Lord inwardly reveals his arm (Isaiah 53:1; John 12:38) are so enlightened as to believe.

17. *And he shall go before him* By these words he points out what would be John's office, and distinguishes him by this mark from the other prophets, who received a certain and peculiar commission, while John was sent for the sole object of going before Christ, as a herald before a king. Thus also the Lord speaks by Malachi,

> "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me,"
>
> (Malachi 3:1.)

In short, the calling of John had no other design than to secure for Christ a willing ear, and to prepare for him disciples. As to the angel making no express mention of Christ in this passage, but declaring John to be the usher or standard-bearer of the eternal God, we learn from it the eternal divinity of Christ. *With the spirit and power of Elijah* By the words *spirit and power,* I understand the power or excellency of the Spirit, with which Elijah was endued; for we must not here indulge in a dream like that of Pythagoras, that the soul of the prophet passed into the body of John, but the same Spirit of God, who had acted efficaciously in Elijah, afterwards exerted a similar power and efficacy in the Baptist. The latter term, *power,* is added, by way of exposition, to denote the kind of grace which was the loftiest distinction of Elijah, that, furnished with heavenly power, he restored in a wonderful manner the decayed worship of God; for such a restoration was beyond human ability. What John undertook was not less astonishing; and, therefore, we ought not to wonder if it was necessary for him to enjoy the same gift.

That he may bring back the hearts of the fathers Here the angel points out the chief resemblance between John and Elijah. He declares that he was sent to collect the scattered people into the unity of faith: for to *bring back the hearts of the fathers* is to restore them from discord to reconciliation; from which it follows, that there had been some division which rent and tore asunder the people. We know how dreadful was the revolt of the people in the time of Elijah, how basely they had degenerated from the fathers, so as hardly to deserve to be reckoned the children of Abraham. Those who were thus disunited Elijah brought into holy harmony. Such was the reunion of parents with children, which was begun by John, and at length finished by Christ. Accordingly, when Malachi speaks of "turning the hearts of the fathers to the children," (Malachi 4:5,) he intimates that the Church would be in a state of confusion when another Elijah should appear; and what was that state is plain enough from history, and will more fully appear in the proper place. The doctrine of Scripture had degenerated through countless inventions, the worship of God was corrupted by very gross superstition, religion was divided into various sects, priests were openly wicked and Epicureans, the people indulged in every kind of wickedness; in short, nothing remained sound. The expression, *bring back the hearts of the fathers to the children,* is not literally true; for it was rather the *children* who had broken the covenant and departed from the right faith of their fathers, that needed to be *brought back* But though the Evangelist does not so literally express that order of *bringing back,* the meaning is abundantly obvious, that, by the instrumentality of John, God would again unite in holy harmony those who had previously been disunited. Both clauses occur in the prophet Malachi, who meant nothing more than to express a mutual agreement.

But as men frequently enter into mutual conspiracies which drive them farther from God, the angel explains, at the same time, the nature of that *bringing back* which he predicts, *the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.* This deserves attention, that we may not foolishly

allow ourselves to be classed with ungodly men under a false pretense of harmony. Peace is a sounding and imposing term, and, whenever the Papists meet with it in scripture, they eagerly seize upon it for the purpose of raising dislike against us, as if we, who are endeavoring to withdraw the world from its base revolt, and bring it back to Christ, were the authors of divisions. But this passage affords a fine exposure of their folly, when the angel explains the manner of a genuine and proper conversion; and declares its support and link to be *the wisdom of the just* Accursed then be the peace and unity by which men agree among themselves apart from God.

By *the wisdom of the just* is unquestionably meant Faith, as, on the contrary, by the *disobedient* are meant Unbelievers. And certainly this is a remarkable encomium on faith, by which we are instructed, that then only are we truly wise unto righteousness when we obey the word of the Lord. The world too has its wisdom, but a perverse and therefore destructive wisdom, which is ever pronounced to be vanity; though the angel indirectly asserts that the shadowy wisdom, in which the children of the world delight, is depraved and accursed before God. This is therefore a settled point, that, with the view of becoming reconciled to each other, men ought first to return to peace with God.

What immediately follows about *making ready a people prepared for the Lord,* agrees with that clause, that John, as the herald of Christ, would *go before* his face, (Malachi 3:1;) for the design of his preaching was to make the people attentive to hear the instruction of Christ. The Greek participle κατεσκευασμένον, it is true, does not so properly mean perfection as the form and adaptation by which things are fitted for their use. This meaning will not agree ill with the present passage. John was commissioned to fit or mould to Christ a people which, formerly ignorant and uneducated, had never shown a desire to learn.

LUKE 1:18-20

Luke 1:18-20
18. And Zacharias said to the angel, How shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife is at an advanced age. **19**. And the angel answering said to him, I am Gabriel, who stand before God, and have been sent to speak to thee, and to convey to thee these glad tidings. **20**. And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak, until the day when these things shall happen; because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time,

And Zacharias said to the angel Next follows the doubt of Zacharias, and the punishment which the Lord inflicted on his unbelief. He had prayed that he might obtain offspring, and now that it is promised, he distrusts, as if he had forgotten his own prayers and faith. It might, at first sight, appear harsh that God is so much offended by his reply. He brings forward his old age as an objection. Abraham did the same; and yet his faith is so highly applauded that Paul declares, he

"considered not his own body now dead, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb," (Romans 4:19,)

but unhesitatingly relied on the truth and power of God. Zacharias inquires how, or by what proof, he might arrive at certainty. But Gideon was not blamed for twice asking a sign, (Judges 6:17, 37, 39.) Nay more, we are shortly after this informed of Mary's objection, *How shall this be, since I know not a man?* (ver. 34,) which the angel passes over as if it contained nothing wrong. How comes it then that God punishes Zacharias so severely, as if he had been guilty of a very heinous sin? I do acknowledge that, if the words only are considered, either all were equally to blame, or Zacharias did nothing wrong. But as the actions and words of men must be judged from the state of the heart, we ought rather to abide by the judgment of God, to whom the hidden secrets of the heart are naked and opened, (Hebrews 4:13.)

Unquestionably, the Lord beheld in Zacharias something worse than his words may bear, and therefore his anger was kindled against him for throwing back with distrust the promised favor. We have no right, indeed, to lay down a law to God which would not leave him free to punish in one the fault which he pardons in others. But it is very evident that the case of Zacharias was widely different from that of Abraham, or Gideon, or Mary. This does not appear in the words; and therefore the knowledge of it must be left to God, whose eyes pierce the depths of the heart. Thus God distinguishes between Sarah's laugh (Genesis 18:12) and Abraham's, (Genesis 17:17,) though the one apparently does not differ from the other. The reason why Zacharias doubted was, that, stopping at the ordinary course of nature, he ascribed less than he ought to have done to the power of God. They take a narrow and disparaging view of the works of God, who believe that he will do no more than nature

holds out to be probable, as if his hand were limited to our senses or confined to earthly means. But it belongs to faith to believe that more can be done than carnal reason admits. Zacharias had no hesitation with regard to its being the voice of God, but as he looked too exclusively at the world, an indirect doubt arose in his mind if what he had heard would really happen. In that respect he did no slight injury to God, for he went so far as to reason with himself, whether God, who had undoubtedly spoken to him, should be regarded as worthy of credit.

At the same time, we ought to know that Zacharias was not so unbelieving as to turn aside wholly from the faith; for there is a general faith which embraces the promise of eternal salvation and the testimony of a free adoption. On the other hand, when God has once received us into favor, he gives us many special promises, — that he will feed us, will deliver us from dangers, will vindicate our reputation, will protect our life; — and so there is a special faith which answers particularly to each of these promises. Thus, it will sometimes happen, that one who trusts in God for the pardon of his sins, and for salvation, will waver on some point, — will be too much alarmed by the dread of death, too solicitous about daily food, or too anxious about his plans. Such was the unbelief of Zacharias; for while he held the root and foundation of faith, he hesitated only on one point, whether God would give to him a son. Let us know, therefore, that those who are perplexed or disturbed by weakness on some particular occasion do not entirely depart or fall off from the faith, and that, though the branches of faith are agitated by various tempests, it does not give way at the root. Besides, nothing was farther from the intention of Zacharias than to call in question the truth of a divine promise; but while he was convinced generally that God is faithful, he was cunningly drawn by the craft and wiles of Satan to draw a wicked distinction. It is all the more necessary for us to keep diligent watch: for which of us shall be secure against the snares of the devil, when we learn that a man so eminently holy, who had all his life maintained strict watchfulness over himself, was overtaken by them?

19. *I am Gabriel* By these words the angel intimates that it was not his veracity, but that of God who sent him, and whose message he brought, that had been questioned; and so he charges Zacharias with having offered an insult to God. To *stand before God* signifies to be ready to yield obedience. It implies that he is not a mortal man, but a heavenly spirits — that he did not fly hither at random, but, as became a servant of God, had faithfully performed his duty: and hence it follows that *God,* the author of the promise, had been treated with indignity and contempt in the person of his ambassador. Of similar import is the declaration of Christ, "*he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me,*" (Luke 10:16.) Although the preaching of the gospel is not brought to us from heaven by angels, yet, since God attested by so many miracles that he was its author, and since Christ, the Prince and Lord of angels, once published it with his own mouth, (Hebrews 1:2,) that he might give it a perpetual sanction, its majesty ought to make as deep an impres-

sion upon us, as if all the angels were heard loudly proclaiming its attestation from heaven. Nay, the apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, not satisfied with elevating the word of the gospel, which speaks by the mouth of men, to an equality with the law brought by angels, draws an argument from the less to the greater.

"If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of rewards"

(Hebrews 2:2,)

"of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God,"

(Hebrews 10:29,)

whose "voice shakes not the earth only, but also heaven?" (Hebrews 12:26.) Let us learn to render to God the obedience of faith, which he values more highly than all sacrifices. *Gabriel* means the strength, or power, or pre-eminence of God, and this name is given to the angel on our account, to instruct us that we must not ascribe to angels any thing of their own, for whatever excellence they possess is from God. The Greek participle, παρεστηκὼς, *(standing,)* is in the past tense, but everybody knows that the past tense of such verbs is often taken for the present, and particularly when a continued act is expressed. The word εὐαγγελίσασθαι *(to convey glad tidings) aggravates* the crime of Zacharias; for he was ungrateful to God, who kindly promised a joyful and desirable event.

20. *And, behold, thou shalt be dumb* It was suitable that this kind of punishment should be inflicted on Zacharias, that, being dumb, he might await the fulfillment of the promise, which, instead of interrupting it by noisy murmurs, he ought to have heard in silence. Faith has its silence to lend an ear to the Word of God. It has afterwards its turn to speak and to answer Amen, according to that passage,

"I will say to them, Thou art my people, and they shall say,
Thou art my God," (Hosea 2:23.)

But as Zacharias had rashly interrupted the Word of God, he is not allowed this favor of breaking out immediately in thanksgiving, but is denied for a time the use of his tongue, which had been too forward. Yet God is pleased graciously to mitigate the punishment, first, by limiting its duration to ten months, and next by not withholding from Zacharias the favor which he was unworthy to enjoy. With the same gentleness does he treat us every day: for when our faith is weak, and we throw out many obstacles, the truth of God, in continuing to flow toward us, must of necessity break through them with a kind of violence. That is the angel's meaning, when he reproaches Zacharias with unbelief, and yet declares that those things which Zacharias did not believe would be *accomplished in due time* And so Zacharias is not a little relieved by learning that his fault has not made void the promise of God, which will afterwards be displayed in a more remarkable manner. It does sometimes happen that, notwithstanding the opposition made by unbelievers, the Lord bestows and fulfils what he

had promised to them. We have a remarkable instance of this in King Ahaz, who rejected the promised safety, and yet was delivered from his enemies, (Isaiah 7:12.) But that resulted, without any advantage to him, in the salvation of the chosen people. It was otherwise with Zacharias, in whom the Lord chastises, and at the same time pardons, the weakness of faith.

LUKE 1:21-25

Luke 1:21-25
21. And the people were waiting for Zacharias, and wondered that he tarried in the temple. **22**. And when he came out, he could not speak to them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple. And he made them to understand by signs, [21] and remained speechless. **23**. And it happened, when the days of his office were fulfilled, he departed to his own house. **24**. Now after these days Elisabeth his wife conceived, and hid herself five months, saying, **25**. Thus hath the Lord done to me in the days when he looked, that he might take away my reproach among men.

21. *And the people were waiting* Luke now relates that the people were witnesses of this vision. Zacharias had tarried in the temple longer than usual. This leads to the supposition that something uncommon has happened to him. When he comes out, he makes known, by looks and gestures, that he has been struck dumb. There is reason to believe, also, that there were traces of alarm in his countenance. Hence they conclude that God has appeared to him. True, there were few or no visions in that age, but the people remembered that formerly, in the time of their fathers, they were of frequent occurrence. It is not without reason, therefore, that they draw this conclusion from obvious symptoms: for it was not an ordinary occurrence, [it was not a common accident, but rather an astonishing work of God,[22]] that he became suddenly dumb without disease, and after a more than ordinary delay came out of the temple in a state of amazement. The word *temple,* as we have already mentioned, is put for the sanctuary, where the altar of incense stood, (Exodus 30:1.) From this place the priests, after performing their sacred functions, were wont to go out into their own court, for the purpose of blessing the people.

23. *When the days were fulfilled* Λειτουργία is employed by Luke to denote a charge or office, which passed, as we have said, to each of them in regular order, (1 Chronicles 24:3.) We are told that, when the time of his office had expired, Zacharias returned home. Hence we conclude that, so long as the priests were attending in their turns, they did not enter their own houses, that they might be entirely devoted and attached to the worship of God. For this purpose galleries were constructed around the walls of the temple, in which they had "chambers," (1 Kings 6:5.) The law did not, indeed, forbid a priest to enter his house, but, as it did not permit those who ate the show-bread to come near their wives, (1 Samuel 21:4,) and as many persons were disposed to treat sacred things in an irreverent manner, this was probably discovered to be a remedy, that, being removed from all temptations, they

21 Il leur donnoit a entendre par signes — *Fr*

22 Ce n'estoit point un accident commun, mais plustost une ceuvre ad-mirable de *Dieu* — *Fr.*

might preserve themselves pure and clear from every defilement. And they were not only discharged from intercourse with their wives, but from the use of wine and every kind of intoxicating drink, (Leviticus 10:9.) While they were commanded to change their mode of living, it was advantageous for them not to depart from the temple, that the very sight of the place might remind them to cultivate such purity as the Lord had enjoined. It was proper also to withdraw every means of gratification, that they might devote themselves more unreservedly to their office.

The Papists of the present day employ this as a pretense for defending the tyrannical law of celibacy. They argue thus. The priests were formerly enjoined to withdraw from their wives, while they were engaged in religious services. Most properly is perpetual continence now demanded from the priests, who not in their turn, but every day, offer sacrifices; more especially since the importance of religious services is far higher than it was under the law. But I should like to know why they do not also abstain from wine and strong drink. For we are not at liberty to separate commandments which God has joined, so as to keep the one half and disregard the other. Intercourse with wives is not so expressly forbidden as the drinking of wine, (Ezekiel 44:21.) If, under the pretense of the law, the Pope enjoins celibacy on his priests, why does he allow them wine? Nay, on this principle, all priests ought to be thrown into some retired apartments of the churches, to pass their whole life immured in prisons, and excluded from the society of women and of the people.

It is now abundantly clear that they wickedly shelter themselves under the law of God, to which they do not adhere. But the full solution of the difficulty depends on the distinction between the law and the gospel. A priest stood in the presence of God, to expiate the sins of the people, to be, as it were, a mediator between God and men. He who sustained that character ought to have had something peculiar about him, that he might be distinguished from the common rank of men, and recognised as a figure of the true Mediator. Such, too, was the design of the holy garments and the anointing. In our day the public ministers and pastors of the church have nothing of this description. I speak of the ministers whom Christ has appointed to feed his flock, not of those whom the Pope commissions, as executioners rather than priests, to murder Christ. Let us therefore rest in the decision of the Spirit, which pronounces that "marriage is honorable in all," (Hebrews 13:4.)

24. *And hid herself* This appears very strange, as if she had been ashamed of the blessing of God. Some think that she did not, venture to appear in public, so long as the matter was uncertain, for fear of exposing herself to ridicule, if her expectation were disappointed. In my opinion, she was so fully convinced of the promise made to her, that she had no doubt of its accomplishment. When she saw a severe punishment inflicted on her husband for "speaking unadvisedly with his lips," (Psalm 106:33,) did she, for five successive months, cherish in her mind a similar doubt? But her words show clearly that her expectation was not doubtful or uncertain. By saying, *thus hath the Lord done to me,* she expressly and boldly

affirms that his favor was ascertained. There might be two reasons for the delay. Until this extraordinary work of God was manifest, she might hesitate to expose it to the diversified opinions of men, for the world frequently indulges in light, rash, and irreverent talking about the works of God. Another reason might be that, when she was all at once discovered to be pregnant, men might be more powerfully excited to praise God. [For, when the works of God show themselves gradually, in process of time we make less account of them than if the thing had been accomplished all at once, without our having ever heard of it—*Fr.*] It was not, therefore, on her own account, but rather with a view to others, that Elisabeth *hid herself*

25. *Thus hath the Lord done to me* She extols in private the goodness of God, until the time is fully come for making it generally known. There is reason to believe that her husband had informed her by writing of the promised offspring, in consequence of which she affirms with greater certainty and freedom that God was the author of this favor. This is confirmed by the following words, *when he looked, that he might take away my reproach;* for she assigns it as the cause of her barrenness that the favor of God had been at that time withdrawn from her. Among earthly blessings, Scripture speaks in the highest terms of the gift of offspring. And justly: for, if the productiveness of the inferior animals is his blessing, the increase and fruitfulness of the human race ought to be reckoned a much higher favor. It is no small or mean honor, that God, who alone is entitled to be regarded as a Father, admits the children of the dust to share with him this title. Let us, therefore, hold this doctrine, that

"children are an heritage of the Lord,
and the fruit of the womb is his reward,"
(Psalm 127:3.)

But Elisabeth looked farther; for, though barren and old, she had conceived by a remarkable miracle, and contrary to the ordinary course of nature.

That he might take away my reproach Not without reason has barrenness been always accounted a *reproach:* for the blessing of the womb is enumerated among the signal instances of the divine kindness. Some think that this was peculiar to the ancient people: because Christ was to come from the seed of Abraham. But this had no reference, except to the tribe of Judah. Others think more correctly that the multiplication of the holy people was happy and blessed, as was said to Abraham, "I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth," (Genesis 13:16;) and again,

"Tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: so shall thy seed be,"
(Genesis 15:5.)

But we ought to connect the universal blessing, which extends to the whole human race, with the promise made to Abraham, which is peculiar to the church of God, (Genesis 13:15.) Let parents learn to be thankful to God for the children which he has given them, and let those who have no offspring acknowledge that God has humbled them in this matter.

Elisabeth speaks of it exclusively as a reproach *among men:* for it is a temporal chastisement, from which we will suffer no loss in the kingdom of heaven.

LUKE 1:26-33

Luke 1:26-33
26. Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, **27**. To a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. **28**. And the angel, coming in to her, said, Hail, thou who hast found favor, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. **29**. But when she had seen him, she was agitated by his address, and was considering what that salutation would be. **30**. And the angel saith to her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favor with God. **31**. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS. **32**. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of David his father: **33**. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

26. *Now in the sixth month* It was a wonderful dispensation of the divine purpose, and far removed from the ordinary judgment of men, that God determined to make the beginning of the generation of the herald more illustrious than that of his own Son. The prophecy respecting John was published in the temple and universally known: Christ is promised to a virgin in an obscure town of Judea, and this prophecy remains buried in the breast of a young woman. But it was proper that, even from the birth of Christ, that saying should be fulfilled,

"it pleased God by foolishness to save them that believe,"

(1 Corinthians 1:21.)

The treasure of this mystery was committed by him to a virgin in such a manner, that at length, when the proper time came, it might be communicated to all the godly. It was, I own, a mean kind of guardianship; but whether for trying the humility of faith, or restraining the pride of the ungodly, it was the best adapted. Let us learn, even when the reason does not immediately appear, to submit modestly to God, and let us not be ashamed to receive instruction from her who carried in her womb Christ the eternal "wisdom of God," (1 Corinthians 1:24.) There is nothing which we should more carefully avoid than the proud contempt that would deprive us of the knowledge of the inestimable secret, which God has purposely "*hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed*" to the humble and "*to babes*," (Luke 10:21.)

It was, I think, for the same reason that he chose *a virgin betrothed to a man* There is no foundation for Origen's opinion, that he did this for the purpose of concealing from Satan the salvation which he was preparing to bestow on men. The marriage was a veil held out before the eyes of the world, that he who was commonly "*supposed to be the son of Joseph*" (Luke 3:23) might at length be believed and acknowledged by the godly to be the

Son of God. Yet the entrance of Christ into the world was not destitute of glory; for the splendor of his Godhead was manifested from the commencement by his heavenly Father. Angels announced that *"a Savior was born,"* (Luke 2:11;) but their voice was only heard by the shepherds, and traveled no farther. One miracle, — everywhere published by *"the wise men who came from the east*," (Matthew 2:1) that they had seen a star which proclaimed the birth of the Highest King,—may have been highly celebrated. Yet we see how God kept his Son, as it were, in concealment, until the time of his full manifestation arrived, and then erected for him a platform, that he might be beheld by all.

The participle μεμνηστευμένην, which is employed by the Evangelist, signifies that the virgin had then been engaged to her bridegroom, but was not yet given as a wife to her husband. For it was customary among Jewish parents to keep their daughters some time at home, after they had been betrothed to men; otherwise, the law relating to the seduction of a "betrothed damsel" (Deuteronomy 22:23) would have been unnecessary. Luke says that *Joseph was of the house of David;* for families are usually reckoned by the names of the men; but on this point we shall speak more fully in another place.

28. *Hail, thou who hast obtained favor* The angel's commission being of an astonishing and almost incredible description, he opens it with a commendation of the grace of God. And certainly, since our limited capacities admit too slender a portion of knowledge for comprehending the vast greatness of the works of God, our best remedy is, to elevate them to meditation on his boundless grace. A conviction of the Divine goodness is the entrance of faith, and the angel properly observes this order, that, after preparing the heart of the virgin by meditation on the grace of God, he may enlarge it to receive an incomprehensible mystery. For the participle κεχαριτωμένη, which Luke employs, denotes the undeserved favor of God. This appears more clearly from the Epistle to the Ephesians, (1:6,) where, speaking of our reconciliation to *God,* Paul says, God "hath made us accepted (ἐχαρίτωσεν) in the Beloved:" that is, he has received into his favor, and embraced with kindness, us who were formerly his enemies.

The angel adds, *the Lord is with thee* To those on whom he has once bestowed his love God shows himself gracious and kind, follows and "crowns them with loving-kindness," (Psalm 103:4.) Next comes the third clause, that she is *blessed among women. Blessing* is here put down as the result and proof of the Divine kindness. The word *Blessed* does not, in my opinion, mean, Worthy of praise; but rather means, Happy. *Thus,* Paul often supplicates for believers, first "grace" and then "peace," (Romans 1:7; Ephesians 1:2,) that is, every kind of blessings; implying that we shall then be truly happy and rich, when we are beloved by God, from whom all blessings proceed. But if Mary's happiness, righteousness, and life, flow from the undeserved love of God, if her virtues and all her excellence are nothing more than the Divine kindness, it is the height of absurdity to tell us that we should seek from her what she derives from another quarter in the same manner as ourselves. With extraordinary ig-

norance have the Papists, by an enchanter's trick, changed this salutation into a prayer, and have carried their folly so far, that their preachers are not permitted, in the pulpit, to implore the grace of the Spirit, except through their *Hail, Mary*[23] But not only are these words a simple congratulation. They unwarrantably assume an office which does not belong to them, and which God committed to none but an angel. Their silly ambition leads them into a second blunder, for they salute a person who is absent.

29. *When she had seen him, she was agitated* Luke does not say that *she was agitated* by the presence of the angel, but *by his address.* Why then does he also mention his presence?[24] The reason, I think, is this. Perceiving in the angel something of heavenly glory, she was seized with sudden dread arising out of reverence for God. *She was agitated,* because she felt that she had received a salutation, not from a mortal man, but from an angel of God. But Luke does not say that she was so *agitated* as to have lost recollection. On the contrary, he mentions an indication of an attentive and composed mind; for he afterwards adds, *and was considering what that salutation would be:* that is, what was its object, and what was its meaning. It instantly occurred to her that the angel had not been sent for a trifling purpose. This example reminds us, first, that we ought not to be careless observers of the works of God; and, secondly, that our consideration of them ought to be regulated by fear and reverence.

30. *Fear not, Mary* He bids her lay aside fear. Let us always remember—what arises from the weakness of the flesh—that, whenever the feeblest ray of the Divine glory bursts upon us, we cannot avoid being alarmed. When we become aware, in good earnest, of the presence of *God,* we cannot think of it apart from its effects.[25] Accordingly, as we are all amenable to his tribunal, fear gives rise to trembling, until God manifests himself as a Father. The holy virgin saw in her own nation such a mass of crimes, that she had good reason for dreading heavier punishments. To remove this fear, the angel declares that he has come to certify and announce an inestimable blessing. The Hebrew idiom, Thou *hast found favor,* is used by Luke instead of, "God has been merciful to thee:" for a person is said to *find favor,* not when he has sought it, but when it has been freely offered to him. Instances of this are so well known, that it would be of no use to quote them.

31. *Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb* The angel adapts his words, first to Isaiah's prophecy, (Isaiah 7:14,) and next to other passages of the Prophets, with the view of affecting more powerfully the mind of the virgin: for such prophecies were well known and highly

23 "Ave, Maria."

24 "Cur ergo aspectus etiam meminit?" Calvin's allusion is brought out more clearly in his own vernacular. "Pourquoy donc dit-il, Quand elle l'eut veu?" — "Why then does he say, *When she had seen him?*"

25 "Neque otiosam imaginari licet." — "Car nous ne pouvons point apprehender à bon escient la presence de Dieu, sinon avec ses effects."

esteemed among the godly. At the same time, it ought to be observed that the angel did not merely speak in private to the ear of the virgin, but brought *glad tidings, (*εὐαγγέλιον*,)* which were shortly afterwards to be published throughout the whole world. It was not without the purpose of God, that the agreement, between ancient prophecies and the present message respecting the manifestation of Christ, was so clearly pointed out. The word *conceive* is enough to set aside the dream of Marcion and Manichaeus: for it is easy to gather from it that Mary brought forth not an ethereal body or phantom, but the fruit which she had previously conceived in her womb.

Thou shalt call his name Jesus The reason of the name is given by Matthew: *for he shall save his people from their sins,* **(**Matthew 1:21**.)** And so the name contains a promise of salvation, and points out the object for which *Christ* was sent by the Father into the world, as he tells us that he "came not to judge the world, but to save the world," (John 12:47.) Let us remember that not by the will of men, but by the command of God, was this name given to him by the angel, that our faith may have its foundation, not in earth, but in heaven. It is derived from the Hebrew word ⊠⊠⊠, salvation, from which comes ⊠⊠⊠⊠, which signifies to save. It is a waste of ingenuity to contend that it differs from the Hebrew name ⊠⊠⊠⊠⊠, (Jehoshua or Joshua.) The Rabbins everywhere write the word *Jesu;* and they do this with evident malice, that they may not bestow on Christ an honorable name, but, on the contrary, may insinuate that he is some pretended Jew. Their manner of writing it, accordingly, is of no more importance than the barking of a dog. The objection that it is far beneath the dignity of the Son of God to have a name in common with others, might equally apply to the name *Christ,* or *Anointed* But the solution of both is easy. What was exhibited in shadow under the law is fully and actually manifested in the Son of God; or, what was then a figure is in him a substance. There is another objection of as little weight. They assert that the name of Jesus is not worthy of veneration and awe, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, (Philippians 2:9, 10,) if it does not belong exclusively to the Son of God. For Paul does not attribute to him a magical name, as if in its very syllables majesty resided, but his language simply means that Christ has received from the Father the highest authority, to which the whole world ought to submit. Let us then bid adieu to such imaginations, and know, that the name *Jesus* was given to Christ, in order that believers may be instructed to seek in him what had formerly been shadowed out under the Law.

32. *He shall be great* The angel had said the same thing about John the Baptist, and yet did not intend to make him equal to Christ. But the Baptist is great in his own class, while the greatness of Christ is immediately explained to be such as raises him above all creatures. For to him alone this belongs as his own peculiar prerogative to be called the Son of God. So the apostle argues.

> Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? (Hebrews 1:5.)

Angels and kings, I admit, are sometimes dignified with this title in Scripture; but they are denominated in common the sons of God, on account of their high rank. But it is perfectly clear and certain, that God distinguishes his own Son from all the others, when he thus addresses him particularly, Thou art my Son, (Psalm 2:7.) Christ is not confounded either with angels or with men, so as to be one of the multitude of the sons of God; but what is given to him no other has a right to claim. The sons of God are kings, not certainly by natural right, but because God has bestowed on them so great an honor. Even angels have no right to this distinction, except on account of their high rank among creatures, in subordination to the Great Head, (Ephesians 1:21.) We too are sons, but by adoption, which we obtain by faith; for we have it not from nature: Christ is the only Son, the only-begotten of the Father, (John 1:14.)

The future tense of the verb, he shall be called *the Son of the Highest,* is tortured by that filthy dog[26] Servetus to prove that Christ is not the eternal Son of *God,* but began to be so considered, when he took upon him our flesh. This is an intolerable slander. He argues that Christ was not the Son of God before he appeared in the world clothed with flesh; because the angel says, *He shall be called* On the contrary, I maintain, the words of the angel mean nothing more than that he, who had been the Son of God from eternity, would be manifested as such in the flesh, (1 Timothy 3:16;) for *to be called* denotes clear knowledge. There is a wide difference between the two statements, — that Christ began to be the Son of God, which he was not before, — and that he was manifested among men, in order that they might know him to be the person who had been formerly promised. Certainly, in every age God has been addressed by his people as a Father, and hence it follows, that he had a Son in heaven, from whom and by whom men obtained the sonship. For men take too much upon them, if they venture to boast of being the sons of God, in any other respect than as members of the only-begotten Son, (John 1:18.) Certain it is, that confidence in the Son alone, as Mediator, inspired the holy fathers with confidence to employ so honorable an address. That more complete knowledge, of which we are now speaking, is elsewhere explained by Paul to mean, that we are now at liberty not only to call God our Father, but boldly to cry, Abba, Father, (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6.)

The Lord God will give unto him the throne of his father David We have said that the angel borrows from the prophets the titles which he bestows on Christ, in order that the

26 The use of such epithets may not be easily reconciled to the refinements of modern taste; but, three centuries ago, few readers would be startled by them, and they are much more sparingly employed by Calvin than by many of his contemporaries. Not to mention that Paul says, *Beware of dogs,* (Philippians 3:2,) and that the statement, *Without are dogs,* (Revelation 22:15,) bears the impress of the *Alpha and Omega,* (Revelation 22:13,) Servetus, to whom the epithet *"filthy"* is applied, had denied the fundamental doctrine of our Lord's supreme Divinity, and had luxuriated in the most revolting and blasphemous expressions. — *Ed.*

holy virgin might more readily acknowledge him to be the Redeemer formerly promised to the fathers. Whenever the prophets speak of the restoration of the church, they direct all the hope of believers to the kingdom of David, so that it became a common maxim among the Jews, that the safety of the church would depend on the prosperous condition of that kingdom, and that nothing was more fitting and suitable to the office of the Messiah than to raise up anew the kingdom of David. Accordingly, the name of David is sometimes applied to the Messiah. "They shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king," (Jeremiah 30:9.) Again, "my servant David shall be a prince among them," (Ezekiel 34:24; 37:24.) "They shall seek the Lord their God, and David their king," (Hosea 3:5.) The passages in which he is called "the son of David" are sufficiently well known. In a word, the angel declares that in the person of Christ would be fulfilled the prediction of Amos, "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen," (Amos 9:11.)

33. *And he shall reign over the house of Jacob* As salvation was promised, in a peculiar manner, to the Jews, (the covenant having been made with their father Abraham, Genesis 17:7,) and Christ, as Paul informs us, "was a minister of the circumcision," (Romans 15:8,) the angel properly fixed his reign in that nation, as its peculiar seat and residence. But this is in perfect accordance with other predictions, which spread and extend the kingdom of Christ to the utmost limits of the earth. By a new and wonderful adoption, God has admitted into the family of Jacob the Gentiles, who formerly were strangers; though in such a manner that the Jews, as the first-born, held a preferable rank; as it is said, "The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion," (Psalm 110:3.) Christ's throne was, therefore, erected among the people of Israel, that he might thence subdue the whole world. All whom he has joined by faith to the children of Abraham are accounted the true Israel. Though the Jews, by their revolt, have separated themselves from the church of God, yet the Lord will always preserve till the end some "remnants" (Romans 11:5;) for his "calling is without repentances" (Romans 11:29.) The body of the people is apparently cut off; but we ought to remember the *mystery* of which Paul speaks, (Romans 11:25,) that God will at length gather some of the Jews out of the dispersion. Meanwhile, the church, which is scattered through the whole world, is the spiritual *house of Jacob;* for it drew its origin from Zion.

For ever The angel points out the sense in which it was so frequently predicted by the prophets that the kingdom of David would be without end. It was only during his own reign and that of Solomon, that it remained wealthy and powerful Rehoboam, the third successor, hardly retained a tribe and a half. The angel now declares that, when it has been established in the person of Christ, it will not be liable to destruction, and, to prove this, employs the words of Daniel, (7:14,) *of his kingdom there shall be no end*[27] Though the meaning of the

27 Daniel's prediction referred to runs thus: "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." The angel does not employ these words; but his de-

words is, that God will for ever protect and defend the kingdom of Christ and the church, so that it shall not perish on the earth "as long as the sun and moon endure," (Psalm 72:5, 17,) yet its true perpetuity relates to the glory to come. So then, believers follow each other in this life, by an uninterrupted succession, till at length they are gathered together in heaven, where they shall reign without end.

parture from them is not strongly marked, and it can scarcely be doubted that he had this passage in his eye. — *Ed.*

LUKE 1:34-38

Luke 1:34-38
34. And Mary said to the angel, How shall this be, since I know not a man? **35**. And the angel answering said to her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which shall be born shall be called the Son of God. **36**. And, behold, Elisabeth thy cousin, even she hath conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month to her who was called barren: **37**. For no word shall be impossible with God. **38**. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.

34. *How shall this be?* The holy virgin appears to confine the power of God within as narrow limits as Zacharias had formerly done; for what is beyond the common order of nature, she concludes to be impossible. She reasons in this manner. *I know not a man:* how then can I believe that what you tell me will happen? We ought not to give ourselves very much trouble,[28] to acquit her of all blame. She ought immediately to have risen by faith to the boundless power of God, which is not at all lettered to natural means, but sways the whole world. Instead of this, she stops at the ordinary way of generation. Still, it must be admitted that she does not hesitate or inquire in such a manner as to lower the power of God to the level of her senses; but is only carried away by a sudden impulse of astonishment to put this question. That she readily embraced the promise may be concluded from this, that, though many things presented themselves on the opposite side, she has no doubt but on one point.

She might instantly have objected, where was that *throne of David?* for all the rank of kingly power had been long ago set aside, and all the luster of royal descent had been extinguished. Unquestionably, if she had formed her opinion of the matter according to the judgment of the flesh, she would have treated as a fable what the angel had told her. There can be no doubt that she was fully convinced of the restoration of the church, and easily gave way to what the flesh would have pronounced to be incredible. And then it is probable that the attention of the public was everywhere directed at that time to the prediction of Isaiah, in which God promises that he would raise up a rod out of the despised stem of Jesse, (Isaiah 11:1.) That persuasion of the kindness of God, which had been formed in the mind of the virgin, led her to admit, in the fullest manner, that she had received a message as to raising up anew the throne of David. If it be objected that there was also another prediction,

28 "Nec vero magnopere laborandum est." This is bold language, and must have sounded harsh and irreverent to a Popish ear: but in his French version Calvin uses still less ceremony. "We must not tease ourselves much to find out a way of vindicating her entirely" — "Or il ne nous faut pas beaucoup *tormenter* a trouver facon de la justifier entierement." — *Ed.*

a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, (Isaiah 7:14,) I reply, that this mystery was then very imperfectly understood. True, the Fathers expected the birth of a King, under whose reign the people of God would be happy and prosperous; but the manner of its accomplishment lay concealed, as if it had been hidden by a veil. There is no wonder, therefore, if the holy virgin puts a question on a subject hitherto unknown to her.

The conjecture which some have drawn from these words, that she had formed a vow of perpetual virginity, is unfounded and altogether absurd. She would, in that case, have committed treachery by allowing herself to be united to a husband, and would have poured contempt on the holy covenant of marriage; which could not have been done without mockery of God. Although the Papists have exercised barbarous tyranny on this subject, yet they have never proceeded so far as to allow the wife to form a vow of continence at her own pleasure. Besides, it is an idle and unfounded supposition that a monastic life existed among the Jews.

We must reply, however, to another objection, that the virgin refers to the future, and so declares that she will have no intercourse with a man. The probable and simple explanation is, that the greatness or rather majesty of the subject made so powerful an impression on the virgin, that all her senses were bound and locked up in astonishment. When she is informed that the Son of God will be born, she imagines something unusual, and for that reason leaves conjugal intercourse out of view. Hence she breaks out in amazement, *How shall this be?* And so God graciously forgives her, and replies kindly and gently by the angel, because, in a devout and serious manner, and with admiration of a divine work, she had inquired *how that would be,* which, she was convinced, went beyond the common and ordinary course of nature. In a word, this question was not so contrary to faith, because it arose rather from admiration than from distrust.

35. *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee* The angel does not explain the manner, so as to satisfy curiosity, which there was no necessity for doing. He only leads the virgin to contemplate the power of the Holy Spirit, and to surrender herself silently and calmly to his guidance. The word ἐπελεύσεται, *shall come upon,* denotes that this would be an extraordinary work, in which natural means have no place. The next clause is added by way of exposition, *and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee:* for the Spirit may be regarded as the essential power of God, whose energy is manifested and exerted in the entire government of the world, as well as in miraculous events. There is an elegant metaphor in the word ἐπισκιάσει, *overshadow.* The *power* of God, by which he guards and protects his own people, is frequently compared in Scripture to a *shadow,* (Psalm 17:8; 57:1; 91:1.) But it appears to have another and peculiar meaning in this passage. The operation of the Spirit would be secret, as if an intervening cloud did not permit it to be beheld by the eyes of men. Now, as God, in performing miracles, withholds from us the manner of his proceedings, so what he chooses to conceal from us ought to be viewed, on our part, with seriousness and adoration.

Therefore also the holy thing which shall be born This is a confirmation of the preceding clause: for the angel shows that Christ must not be born by ordinary generation,[29] that he may be *holy,* and that he may be the *Son of God;* that is, that in holiness and glory he may be high above all creatures, and may not hold an ordinary rank among men. Heretics, who imagine that he became the Son of God after his human generation, seize on the particle *therefore* as meaning that he would be called the Son of God, *because* he was conceived in a remarkable manner by the power of the Holy Spirit. But this is a false conclusion: for, though he was manifested to be the Son of God in the flesh, it does not follow that he was not the Word begotten of the Father before the ages. On the contrary, he who had been the Son of God in his eternal Godhead, appeared also as the Son of God in human flesh. This passage not only expresses a unity of person in Christ, but at the same time points out that, in clothing himself with human flesh, Christ is the Son of God. As the name, Son *of God,* belonged to the divine essence of Christ from the beginning, so now it is applied unitedly to both natures, because the secret and heavenly manner of generation has separated him from the ordinary rank of men. In other passages, indeed, with the view of asserting that he is truly man, he calls himself the Son of man, (John 5:27;) but the truth of his human nature is not inconsistent with his deriving peculiar honor above all others from his divine generation, having been conceived out of the ordinary way of nature by the Holy Spirit. This gives us good reason for growing confidence, that we may venture more freely to call God our Father, because his only Son, in order that we might have a Father in common with him, chose to be our brother.

It ought to be observed also that Christ, because he was conceived by a spiritual power, is called *the holy seed* For, as it was necessary that he should be a real man, in order that he might expiate our sins, and vanquish death and Satan in our flesh; so was it necessary, in order to his cleansing others, that he should be free from every spot and blemish, (1 Peter 1:19.) Though Christ was formed of the seed of Abraham, yet he contracted no defilement from a sinful nature; for the Spirit of God kept him pure from the very commencement: and this was done not merely that he might abound in personal holiness, but chiefly that he might sanctify his own people. The manner of conception, therefore, assures us that we have a Mediator separate from sinners, (Hebrews 7:26.)

36. *And, behold, Elisabeth thy cousin* By an instance taken from her own relatives, the angel encourages the faith of Mary to expect a miracle. If neither the barrenness nor the old age of Elisabeth could prevent God from making her a mother, there was no better reason why Mary should confine her view within the ordinary limits of nature, when she beheld such a demonstration of divine power in her *cousin* He mentions expressly *the sixth month;* because in the fifth month a woman usually feels the child quicken in the womb, so that the

29 "Christum opportere absque viri et mulieris coitu nasci."

sixth month removes all doubt. True, Mary ought to have placed such a reliance on the bare word of God as to require no support to her faith from any other quarter; but, to prevent farther hesitation, the Lord condescends to strengthen his promise by this new aid. With equal indulgence does he cheer and support us every day; nay, with greater indulgence, because our faith is weaker. That we may not doubt his truth, testimonies to confirm it are brought by him from every direction.

A question arises, how Elisabeth, who was *of the daughters of Aaron,* (ver. 5,) and Mary, who was descended from the stock of David, could be *cousins* This appears to be at variance with the law, which prohibited women from marrying into a different tribe from their own, (Numbers 36:6.) With respect to the law, if we look at its object, it forbade those intermarriages only which might "remove inheritances from tribe to tribe," (Numbers 36:7.) No such danger existed, if any woman of the tribe of Judah married a priest, to whom an inheritance could not be conveyed. The same argument would hold if a woman of the tribe of Levi passed into another tribe. It is possible that the mother of the holy virgin might be descended from the family of Aaron, and so her daughter might be *cousin* to Elisabeth.

37. *For no word shall be impossible with God* If we choose to take ῥῆμα, *word,* in its strict and native sense, the meaning is, that God will do what he hath promised, for no hinderance can resist his power. The argument will be, God hath promised, and therefore he will accomplish it; for we ought not to allege any impossibility in opposition to his *word* But as a *word* often means a *thing* in the idiom of the Hebrew language, (which the Evangelists followed, though they wrote in Greek,)[30] we explain it more simply, that *nothing is impossible with God* We ought always, in- deed, to hold it as a maxim, that they wander widely from the truth who, at their pleasure, imagine the power of God to be something beyond his *word;* for we ought always to contemplate his boundless power, that it may strengthen our hope and confidence. But it is idle, and unprofitable, and even dangerous, to argue what God can do unless we also take into account what he resolves to do. The angel does here what God frequently does in Scripture, employs a general doctrine to confirm one kind of promise. This is the true and proper use of a general doctrine, to apply its scattered promises to the present subject, whenever we are uneasy or distressed; for so long as they retain their general form, they make little impression upon us. We need not wonder if Mary is reminded by the angel of the power of God; for our distrust of it diminishes very greatly our confidence in the promises. All acknowledge in words that God is Almighty; but, if he promises any thing beyond what we are able to comprehend, we remain in doubt.[31] Whence comes this but

30 "Laquelle ont suivie les Evangelistes, combien qu'ils escrivissent en Grec." — *Fr.*

31 "Haesitamus." — "We are in a state of uncertainty, without being able to convince ourselves of it." — "Nous sommes en branle sans pouvoir nous y asseurer." — *Fr.*

from our ascribing to his power nothing more than what our senses receive? Thus Paul, commending the faith of Abraham, says, that he

"gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform," (Romans 4:20, 21.)

In another passage, speaking of the hope of eternal life, he sets before him the promise of God. "I know," says he,

"whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him," (2 Timothy 1:12.)

This may seem to be a small portion of faith; for no man, however wicked, openly denies God's claim to be Almighty. But he who has the power of God firmly and thoroughly fixed in his heart will easily surmount the other obstacles which present themselves to faith. It ought to be observed, however, that the power of God is viewed by true faith, if I may use the expression, *as efficacious*[32] For God is and wishes to be acknowledged as powerful, that by the accomplishment itself he may prove his faithfulness.

38. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord* The holy virgin does not allow herself to dispute any farther: and yet many things might unquestionably have obtruded themselves, to repress that faith, and even to draw off her attention from what was said to her by the angel. But she stops the entrance of opposing arguments, and compels herself to obey. This is the real proof of faith, when we restrain our minds, and, as it were, hold them captive, so that they dare not reply this or that to God: for boldness in disputing, on the other hand, is the mother of unbelief. These are weighty expressions, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord:* for she gives and devotes herself unreservedly to God, that he may freely dispose of her according to his pleasure. Unbelievers withdraw from his hand, and, as far as lies in their power, obstruct his work: but faith presents us before God, that we may be ready to yield obedience. But if the holy virgin was *the handmaid of the Lord,* because she yielded herself submissively to his authority, there cannot be worse obstinacy than to fly from him, and to refuse that obedience which he deserves and requires. In a word, as faith alone makes us obedient servants to God, and gives us up to his power, so unbelief makes us rebels and deserters. *Be it unto me* This clause may be interpreted in two ways. Either the holy virgin, leaving her former subject,[33] betakes herself suddenly to prayers and supplications; or, she proceeds in the same strain[34] to yield and surrender herself to God. I interpret it simply that she is convinced of the power of God, follows cheerfully where he calls, trusts also to his promise,

32 "Effectualem." — "We must observe that true faith apprehends the power of God, not in the air, but with its results." — "Il faut noter que la vraye foy apprehende la puissance de Dieu, non point en l'alr, mais avec ses effects."

33 "Laissant son premier propos."

34 "Uno contextu." — "En continuant le fil de son propos."

and not only expects, but eagerly desires, its accomplishment. [We must also observe that she is convinced on the word of the angel, because she knows that it proceeded from God: valuing its credit, not with reference to him who was its messenger, but with reference to him who was its author.[35]]

35 "Il faut aussi noter qu'elle s'asseure sur la parole de l'Ange, par ce qu'elle sait qu'elle est procedee de Dieu: pesant la dignite d'icelle non a cause de celuy qui en estoit le messager, mais a cause de celui qui en estoit l'autheur."

LUKE 1:39-45

Luke 1:39-45
39. And Mary arising in those days went into the mountainous parts [36] with haste, into a city of Judah, **40**. And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth. **41**. And it happened, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe started [37] in her womb, and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, **42**. And exclaimed with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. **43**. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? **44**. For lo, when the voice of thy salutation was made [38] in my ears, the babe started for joy in my womb. **45**. And blessed is she who believed: for there shall be a fulfillment [39] to those things which have been told her by the Lord. [40]

39. *And Mary arising* This departure mentioned by Luke proves that Mary's faith was not of a transitory nature: for the promise of God does not fade away with the presence of the angel, but is impressed upon her mind. The *haste* indicates a sincere and strong affection. We may infer from it that the Virgin disregarded every thing else and formed a just estimate of this grace of God. But it may be inquired, what was her object in undertaking this journey? It certainly was not made for the mere purpose of inquiry: for she cherished in her heart by faith the Son of God as already conceived in her womb. Nor do I agree with those who think that she came for the purpose of congratulating Elisabeth.[41] I think it more probable that her object was, partly to increase and strengthen her faith, and partly to celebrate the grace of God which both had received.[42]

There is no absurdity in supposing, that she sought to confirm her faith by a view of the miracle, which had been adduced to her with no small effect by the angel. For, though believers are satisfied with the bare word of God, yet they do not disregard any of his works which they find to be conducive to strengthen their faith. Mary was particularly bound to receive the assistance which had been offered, unless she chose to reject what the Lord had

36 "In montana;" — "et s'en alla hastivement aux montagnes;" — "and went away hastily to the mountains."

37 "L'enfant tressaillit."

38 "Facta est;" — "est parvenue a mes aureilles;" — "reached my ears."

39 "Complementum erit."

40 "Car les choses qui luy ont este dites par le Seigneur luy seront accomplies." — "For the things which were told her by the Lord shall be accomplished to her."

41 "Gratulandi causa;" — "pour faire caresse a sa cousine."

42 "Illustrandae ultro citroque gratiae Dei;" — "de celebrer et magnifier la grace de Dieu faite a l'une et a l'autre."

freely given to her. Besides, the mutual interview might arouse both Elisabeth and herself to higher gratitude, as is evident from what follows. The power of God became more remarkable and striking by taking in at one view both favors, the very comparison of which gave no small additional luster. Luke does not name the city in which Zacharias dwelt, but only mentions that it belonged to the tribe of Judah, and that it was situated in a hilly district. Hence we infer that it was farther distant than Jerusalem was from the town of Nazareth.

41. *When Elisabeth heard* It is natural that sudden joy, on the part of a pregnant woman, should cause a motion of the child in her womb; but Luke intended to express an extraordinary occurrence. No good purpose would be served by involving ourselves in intricate questions, if the child was aware of the presence of Christ, or felt an emotion of piety: it is enough for us that *the babe started* by a secret movement of the Spirit. Luke does not say that the feeling belonged to the child, but rather intimates that this part of the Divine operation took place in the mother herself, that *the babe started in her womb* The expression, she *was filled with the Holy Ghost,* means that she was suddenly endued with the gift of prophecy to an unusual extent: for the gifts of the Spirit had not formerly been wanting in her, but their power then appeared more abundant and extraordinary.

42. *Blessed art thou* She seems to put Mary and Christ on an equal footing, which would have been highly improper. But I cheerfully agree with those who think that the second clause assigns the reason; for *and* often signifies *because.* Accordingly, Elisabeth affirms, that her cousin was *blessed* on account of the blessedness of her child. To carry Christ in her womb was not Mary's first *blessedness,* but was greatly inferior to the distinction of being born again by the Spirit of God to a new life. Yet she is justly called *blessed,* on whom God bestowed the remarkable honor of bringing into the world his own Son, through whom she had been spiritually renewed. And at this day, the blessedness brought to us by Christ cannot be the subject of our praise, without reminding us, at the same time, of the distinguished honor which God was pleased to bestow on Mary, in making her the mother of his Only Begotten Son.

43. *And whence is this to me?* The happy medium observed by Elisabeth is worthy of notice. She thinks very highly of the favors bestowed by God on Mary, and gives them just commendation, but yet does not praise them more highly than was proper, which would have been a dishonor to God. For such is the native depravity of the world, that there are few persons who are not chargeable with one of these two faults. Some, delighted beyond measure with themselves, and desirous to shine alone, enviously despise the gifts of God in their brethren; while others praise them in so superstitious a manner as to convert them into idols. The consequence has been, that the first rank is assigned to Mary, and Christ is lowered as it were to the footstool.[43] Elisabeth, again, while she praises her, is so far from

43 "Christo velut in subsellium redacto." S*ubsellium is* evidently not employed here to convey a shade of the honor belonging to the seats.

hiding the Divine glory, that she ascribes everything to God. And yet, though she acknowledges the superiority of Mary to herself and to others, she does not envy her the higher distinction, but modestly declares that she had obtained more than she deserved.

She calls Mary *the mother of her Lord* This denotes a unity of person in the two natures of Christ; as if she had said, that he who was begotten a mortal man in the womb of Mary is, at the same time, the eternal God. For we must bear in mind, that she does not speak like an ordinary woman at her own suggestion, but merely utters what was dictated by the Holy Spirit. This name *Lord* strictly belongs to the Son of God "manifested in the flesh," (1 Timothy 3:16,) who has received from the Father all power, and has been appointed the highest ruler of heaven and earth, that by his agency God may govern all things. Still, he is in a peculiar manner the *Lord* of believers, who yield willingly and cheerfully to his authority; for it is only of "his body" that he is "the head," (Ephesians 1:22, 23.) And so Paul says, "though there be lords many, yet to us," that is, to the servants of faith, "there is one Lord," (1 Corinthians 8:5, 6.) By mentioning the sudden movement of the babe which she carried in her womb, (ver. 44,) as heightening that divine favor of which she is speaking, she unquestionably intended to affirm that she felt something supernatural and divine.

45. *And blessed is she that believed* It was by a hidden movement of the Spirit, as is evident from a former statement of Luke, that Elisabeth spoke. The same Spirit declares that Mary is *blessed* because she *believed,* and by commending Mary's faith, informs us generally in what the true happiness of men consists. Mary was *blessed,* because, embracing in her heart the promise of God, she conceived and brought forth a Savior to herself and to the whole which the Judges occupied; as when Cicero proposes to appeal from the Senate to the popular assembly, "a subselliis in rem deferre." Calvin may have had in his eye such a phrase as "imi subsellii vir," and his meaning is fully brought out by his own version, "sur le marchepied." — *Ed* world. This was peculiar to her: but as we have not a drop of righteousness, life, or any other benefit, except so far as the Lord presents them to us in his Word, it is faith alone that rescues us from the lowest poverty and misery, and makes us partakers of true happiness.

There is great weight in this clause, *for there shall be a fulfillment to those things which have been told her* The meaning is, faith gives way to the divine promises, that they may obtain their accomplishment in us. The truth of God certainly does not depend on the will of men, but God remains always true, (Romans 3:4,) though the whole world—unbelievers and liars—should attempt to ruin his veracity. Yet, as unbelievers are unworthy to obtain the fruit of the promises, so Scripture teaches us, that by faith alone they are powerful for our salvation. God offers his benefits indiscriminately to all, and faith opens its bosom[44] to

44 "Sinum expandit;" — "mais la foy, par maniere dire, tend son giron pour les recevoir;" — "but faith, so to speak, holds its lap to receive them."

receive them; while unbelief allows them to pass away, so as not to reach us. If there had been any unbelief in Mary, that could not prevent God from accomplishing his work in any other way which he might choose. But she is called *blessed,* because she received by faith the blessing offered to her, and opened up the way to God for its accomplishment; while faith, on the other hand, shuts the gate, and restrains his hand from working, that they who refuse the praise due to its power may not feel its saving effect. We must observe also the relation between the *word* and *faith,* from which we learn that, in the act of believing, we give our assent to God who speaks to us, and hold for certain what he has promised to us that he will do. The phrase, *by the Lord,* is of the same import with an expression in common use, *on the part of God;* for the promise had been brought by the angel, but proceeded from God alone. Hence we infer that, whether God employs the ministrations of angels or of men, he wishes equal honor to be paid to his Word as if he were visibly descending from heaven.

LUKE 1:46-50

Luke 1:46-50
46. And Mary saith, My soul magnifieth the Lord, **47**. And my spirit hath rejoiced [45] in God my Savior. **48**. Because he hath looked upon the low condition of his handmaid: for from this time all generations shall call me blessed, **49**. Because he who is mighty hath done to me wonderful [46] things: and holy is his name. **50**. And his mercy is from generation to generation to them that fear him.

Now follows a remarkable and interesting song of the holy virgin, which plainly shows how eminent were her attainments in the grace of the Spirit. There are three clauses in this song. First, Mary offers solemn thanksgiving for that mercy of God which she had experienced in her own person. Next, she celebrates in general terms God's power and judgments. Lastly, she applies these to the matter in hand, treating of the redemption formerly promised, and now granted to the church.

46. My *soul magnifieth* Here Mary testifies her gratitude, as we have already said. But as hypocrites, for the most part, sing the praises of God with open mouth, unaccompanied by any affection of the heart, Mary says that she praises God from an inward feeling of the mind. And certainly they who pronounce his glory, not from the mind, but with the tongue alone, do nothing more than profane his holy name. The words *soul* and *spirit* are used in Scripture in various senses, but, when employed together, they denote chiefly two faculties of the soul; *spirit* being taken for the understanding, and *soul* for the seat of the affections. To comprehend the meaning of the holy virgin, it must be observed that what is here placed second is first in order; for the excitement of the will of man to praise God must be preceded by a *rejoicing of the spirit,*[47] as James says, "Is any merry? let him sing psalms," (James 5:13.) Sadness and anxiety lock up the soul, and restrain the tongue from celebrating the goodness of God. When the soul of Mary exults with joy, the heart breaks out in praising God. It is with great propriety, in speaking of the joy of her heart, that she gives to God the appellation of *Savior* Till God has been recognised as a *Savior,* the minds of men are not free to indulge in true and full joy, but will remain in doubt and anxiety. It is God's fatherly kindness alone, and the salvation flowing from it, that fill the soul with joy. In a word, the first thing necessary for believers is, to be able to rejoice that they have their salvation in God. The next ought

45 "Exultavit;" — "mon esprit s'est esiouy."

46 "Magnifica."

47 "Car avant que la volonte de l' homme soit mise en train de louer Dieu, il faut qu'il y ait devant une alaigrete et resiouissance d'esprit." — "For before the will of man is set agoing to praise God, there must be previously a cheerfulness and rejoicing of spirit."

to follow, that, having experienced God to be a kind Father, they may "offer to him thanksgiving," (Psalm 50:14.) The Greek word σωτὴρ, *Savior,* has a more extensive signification than the Latin word *Servator;* for it means not only that he once delivers, but that he is "the Author of eternal salvations" (Hebrews 5:9.)

48. *Because he hath looked* She explains the reason why the joy of her heart was founded in God to be, that out of free grace he had looked upon her. By calling herself *low* she disclaims all merit, and ascribes to the undeserved goodness of God every occasion of boasting. For ταπείνωσις, *lowness,* does not here denote — as ignorant and uneducated men have foolishly imagined — "submission, or modesty, or a quality of the mind," but signifies "a mean and despicable condition."[48] The meaning is, "I was unknown and despised, but that did not prevent God from deigning to cast his eyes upon me." But if Mary's *lowness* is contrasted with excellence — as the matter itself and the Greek word make abundantly plain — we see how Mary makes herself nothing, and praises God alone. And this was not the loud cry of a pretended humility, but the plain and honest statement of that conviction which was engraven on her mind; for she was of no account in the eyes of the world, and her estimation of herself was nothing more.

From this time She announces that this kindness of God will be kept in remembrance throughout *all generations* But if it is so remarkable, that it ought to be proclaimed every where by the lips of all men, silence regarding it would have been highly improper in Mary, on whom it was bestowed. Now observe, that Mary makes her happiness to consist in nothing else, but in what she acknowledges to have been bestowed upon her by *God,* and mentions as the gift of his grace. "I shall be reckoned blessed," she says, "through all ages." Was it because she sought this praise by her own power or exertion? On the contrary, she makes mention of nothing but of the work of God. Hence we see how widely the Papists differ from her, who idly adorn her with their empty devices, and reckon almost as nothing the benefits which she received from God.[49] They heap up an abundance of magnificent

48 "Les Latins, traduisans ce passage du Grec, ont us, du mot d'Humi- lite, lequel les barbares et sots parleurs de Latin, prennent ici comme en Francois, pour une facon de faire contraire a l'arrogance, assavoir quand une personne s'estime rien: mais il se prend autrement, assavoir pour Petitesse; c'est a dire, condition basse et meprisee." — "The Latins, translating this passage from the Greek, have used the word Humility, which barbarians and fools talking Latin take here, as in French, for a manner of acting opposed to pride: but it is taken differently, namely, for Meanness, that is, a low and despicable condition."

49 "En cela nous voyons coment les Papistes accordent mal avec elle, lesquels sans jugement la parent de nouvelles louanges forgees en leurs cerveaux; et cependant ne tiennent quasi conte do tous les biens que'lle a eus de Dieu." — "In this we see how ill the Papists agree with her, who without judgment adorn her with new praises forged in their own brains; and yet make no account, as it were, of all the benefits which she had from God."

and very presumptuous titles, such as, "Queen of Heaven, Star of Salvation, Gate of Life, Sweetness, Hope, and Salvation." Nay more, to such a pitch of insolence and fury have they been hurried by Satan, that they give her authority over Christ;[50] for this is their pretty song, "Beseech the Father, Order the Son."[51] None of these modes of expression, it is evident, proceeded from the Lord. All are disclaimed by the holy virgin in a single word, when she makes her whole glory to consist in acts of the divine kindness. If it was her duty to praise the name of God alone, who *had done to her wonderful things,* no room is left for the pretended titles, which come from another quarter. Besides, nothing could be more disrespectful to her, than to rob the Son of God of what is his own, to clothe her with the sacrilegious plunder.

Let Papists now go, and hold us out as doing injury to the mother of Christ, because we reject the falsehoods of men, and extol in her nothing more than the kindness of God. Nay, what is most of all honorable to her we grant, and those absurd worshippers refuse.[52] We cheerfully acknowledge her as our teacher, and obey her instruction and commands. There certainly is no obscurity in what she says here; but the Papists throw it aside, trample it as it were under foot, and do all they can to destroy the credit of her statements?[53] Let us remember that, in praising both men and angels, there is a general rule laid down, to extol in them the grace of God; as nothing is at all worthy of praise which did not proceed from Him.

He who is mighty hath done to me wonderful things She informs us, that the reason why God did not in this case employ the assistance of others was, to make his own power more illustrious. And here we must recall what she formerly said, that God *had looked upon her,* though she was mean and despicable. Hence it follows, that those praises of Mary are absurd and spurious which do not altogether exalt the power and free grace of God.

49. And *holy is his name* This is the second part of the song, in which the holy virgin celebrates in general terms the power, judgments, and mercy of God. This clause must not be viewed as a part of the preceding one, but must be read separately. Mary had extolled the grace of God, which she had experienced in her own person. Hence she takes occasion to

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50 "Qui plus est, Satan les a transportez en une telle rage et forcenerie, qui'ls n'ont point eu de honte du luy attributer l'authorite de commander a Christ." — "What is more, Satan has carried them away to such a rage and fury, that they are not ashamed to attribute to her authority to command Christ."

51 "Roga Patrem, jube Natum."

52 "En ce faisant, nous luy accordons ce qui luy est le plus honorable, en lieu que ces habiles gens, qui la servent a contrepoil, l'en despouillent." — "In doing this we grant to her what is the most honorable, while those clever people, who serve her the wrong way, take it from her."

53 "Fidem ejus dictis abrogant;" — "dementent la vierge en tant qu'en eux est;" — "as far as lies in them, they make the virgin a liar."

exclaim, that *holy is his name, and his mercy endures throughout all generations* The name of God is called *holy,* because it is entitled to the highest reverence; and whenever the name of God is mentioned, it ought immediately to remind us of his adorable majesty.

The next clause, which celebrates the perpetuity of the Divine mercy, is taken from that solemn form of covenant,

"I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant,"

(Genesis 17:7)

and again,

"who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations," (Deuteronomy 7:9.)

By these words, he not only declares, that he will always be like himself, but expresses the favor which he continues to manifest towards his own people after their death, loving their children, and their children's children, and all their posterity. Thus he followed the posterity of Abraham with uninterrupted kindness; for, having once received their father Abraham into favor, he had made with him "an everlasting covenant."

But as not all who are descended from Abraham according to the flesh are the true children of Abraham, Mary confines the accomplishment of the promise to the true worshippers of God, to *them that fear him:* as David also does:

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them,"

(Psalm 103:17,18.)

While God promises that he will be merciful to the children of the saints through all generations, this gives no support to the vain confidence of hypocrites: for falsely and groundlessly do they boast of God as their Father, who are the spurious children of the saints, and have departed from their faith and godliness.[54] This exception sets aside the falsehood and arrogance of those who, while they are destitute of faith, are puffed up with false pretenses to the favor of God. A universal covenant of salvation had been made by God with the posterity of Abraham; but, as stones moistened by the rain do not become soft, so the promised righteousness and salvation are prevented from reaching unbelievers through their own hardness of heart. Meanwhile, to maintain the truth and firmness of his, promise, God has preserved "a seed," (Romans 9:29.)

54 "Car c'est a tort et fausses enseignes qu'ils se glorifient d'avoir Dieu pour leur Pere, puis qu'ils sont enfans bastards des saincts, et ont desvoye de leur foy et sainctete." — "For it is improperly and under false colors that they boast of having God for their Father, since they are bastard children of the saints, and have departed from their faith and holiness."

Under the *fear* of the Lord is included the whole of godliness and religion, and this cannot exist without faith. But here an objection may be urged. What avails it that God is called merciful, if no man finds him to be so unless he deserves his favor? For, if the mercy of God is *upon them that fear him,* godliness and a good conscience procure his grace to men, and in this way men go before his grace by their own merits. I reply, this is a part of his mercy, that he bestows on the children of the godly fear and reverence for his majesty. This does not point out the commencement of his grace, as if God were idly looking down from heaven, to see who are worthy of it. All that is intended is, to shake off the perverse confidence of hypocrites, that they may not imagine God to be bound to them, because they are the children of saints according to the flesh: the divine covenant having another and very different object, that God may have always a people in the world, by whom he is sincerely worshipped.

LUKE 1:51-55

Luke 1:51-55
51. He hath done might [55] with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the thought of their heart. **52**. He hath cast down the nobles from their thrones, and hath exalted mean persons. **53**. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and hath sent the rich away empty. **54**. He hath lifed up his servant Israel, so as to be mindful of his mercy, **55**. As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

51. *He hath done might* This means, "he hath wrought powerfully." The *arm* of God is contrasted with every other aid: as in Isaiah, "I looked, and there was none to help," (Isaiah 63:5;) *"therefore,"* says he elsewhere,

"his arm brought salvation unto him;
and his righteousness, it sustained him," (Isaiah 59:16.)

Mary therefore means: God rested satisfied with his own power, employed no companions in the work, called none to afford him aid. What immediately follows about *the proud* may be supposed to be added for one of two reasons: either because *the proud* gain nothing by endeavoring, like the giants of old, to oppose God; or, because God does not display the power of his arm for salvation, except in the case of the *humble,* while *the proud,* who arrogate much to themselves, are *thrown down* To this relates the exhortation of Peter,

"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God,"
(1 Peter 5:6.)

He hath scattered[56] *the proud in the thought of their heart*[57] This expression is worthy of notice: for as their pride and ambition are outrageous, as their covetousness is insatiable, they pile up their deliberations to form an immense heap, and, to say all in a single word, they build the tower of Babel, (Genesis 11:9.) Not satisfied with having made one or another foolish attempt beyond their strength, or with their former schemes of mad presumption, they still add to their amount. When God has for a time looked down from heaven, in silent mockery, on their splendid preparations, he unexpectedly scatters the whole mass: just as when a building is overturned, and its parts, which had formerly been bound together by a strong and firm union, are widely scattered in every direction.

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55 "Il a besongne puissament par son bras." — "He hath wrought powerfully by his arm."

56 διεσχόρπισεν,, he *utterly discomfits,* a metaphor derived from putting to flight a defeated enemy. The word not unfrequently occurs in the Septuagint, but very rarely in the classical writers; though one example is adduced by Kuinoel from Aelian, Var. Hist. 13:46: τοὺς μέν διεσχόζπισεν, οὓς, (read τοὺς) δὲ ἀπέχτειενε." — *Bloomfield's Greek Testament.*

57 "La ou nous avons rendu, *Il a dissipe,* le mot Grec signifie proprement, Il a escarte ou espars."

52. *He hath cast down the nobles* This translation has been adopted, for the sake of avoiding ambiguity: for though the Greek word δυνάσται is derived from δύναμις, *power,* it denotes governors and eminent rulers.[58] Many persons think that δυνάστας is a participle. They are said by Mary to be *cast down from their thrones,* that obscure and unknown persons may be elevated in their room; and so she ascribes to the providence and judgments of God what ungodly men can the game of Fortune.[59] Let us understand, that she does not ascribe to God a despotic power,—as if men were tossed and thrown up and down like balls by a tyrannical authority,—but a just government, founded on the best reasons, though they frequently escape our notice. God does not delight in changes, or elevate in mockery to a lofty station, those whom he has determined immediately to throw down.[60] It is rather the depravity of men that overturns the state of things, because nobody acknowledges that the disposal of every one is placed in His will and power.

Those who occupy a higher station than others are not only chargeable with disdainfully and cruelly insulting their neighbors, but act in a daring manner towards Him to whom they owe their elevation. To instruct us by facts, that whatever is lofty and elevated in the world is subject to God, and that the whole world is governed by his dominion, some are exalted to high honor, while others either come down in a gradual manner, or else fall headlong from their thrones. Such is the cause and object of the changes which is assigned by David, "He poureth contempt upon princes," (Psalm 107:39;) and by Daniel,

> "He changeth the times and the seasons:
> he removeth kings, and setteth up kings," (Daniel 2:21.)

We see, indeed, how the princes of the world grow extravagantly insolent, indulge in luxury, swell with pride, and are intoxicated with the sweets of prosperity. If the Lord cannot tolerate such ingratitude, we need not be surprised.

The usual consequence is, that those whom God has raised to a high estate do not occupy it long. Again, the dazzling luster of kings and princes so overpowers the multitude, that there are few who consider that there is a God above. But if princes brought a scepter with them from the womb, and if the stability of their thrones were perpetual, all acknowledgment of God and of his providence would immediately disappear. When the Lord raises mean persons to exalted rank, he triumphs over the pride of the world, and at the same time encourages simplicity and modesty in his own people.

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58 "Le mot Grec (δυνάσται) vient de Puissance, comme si on disoit, Les puissans: mais il signifie les gouverneurs et gras seigneurs." — "The Greek word comes from power, as if she had said, 'The Mighty:' but it means governors and great lords."

59 "Ludam Fortunae;" — "le jeu ou la roue de la Fortune;" — "the game or wheel of Fortune."

60 "Il ne faut pas penser que pour se jouer des hommes il les esleve amsi haut, et puis les abaisse." — "We must not imagine that, to amuse himself with men, he raises them so high, and then sinks them low."

Thus, when Mary says, that it is God who *casteth down nobles from their thrones, and exalteth mean persons,* she teaches us, that the world does not move and revolve by a blind impulse of Fortune, but that all the revolutions observed in it are brought about by the Providence of God, and that those judgments, which appear to us to disturb and overthrow the entire framework of soclety, are regulated by God with unerring justice. This is confirmed by the following verse, *He hath filled the hungry with good things, and hath sent the rich away empty:* for hence we infer that it is not in themselves, but for a good reason, that God takes pleasure in these changes. It is because the great, and rich, and powerful, lifted up by their abundance, ascribe all the praise to themselves, and leave nothing to God. We ought therefore to be scrupulously on our guard against being carried away by prosperity, and against a vain satisfaction of the flesh, lest God suddenly deprive us of what we enjoy. To such godly persons as feel poverty and almost famine, and lift up their cry to God, no small consolation is afforded by this doctrine, that he *filleth the hungry with good things*

54. *He hath lifted up his servant Israel* In this last clause the general statements are applied by Mary to the present occasion. The meaning is, God has now granted the salvation which he had formerly promised to the holy fathers. And first, the verb ἀντιλαμζάνεσθαι*, to lift up,* contains an elegant metaphor:[61] for the state of the nation was so fallen, that its entire restoration could not be expected on ordinary principles. And then God is said to have *lifted up Israel,* because he stretched out his hand, and lifted him up when lying prostrate. Religion had been polluted in innumerable ways. The public instruction retained almost nothing pure. The government of the Church was in the greatest confusion, and breathed nothing but shocking barbarity. The order of civil society no longer subsisted. The great body of the people were torn like wild beasts by the Romans and Herod. So much the more glorious was the restoration, which a state of affairs so desperate did not allow them to expect. Παιδὸς may here be taken either for *child* or for *servant:* but the latter signification is more appropriate. *Israel* is called, in this as in many other places, the *servant* of God, because he had been received into the family of God.

So as to be mindful Mary assigns the reason why the nation, when verging to ruin, was received by God; or rather, why God lifted it up when already fallen. It was to give an illustration of his *mercy* in its preservation. She expressly mentions that God had *remembered* his mercy, which he might appear in some sort to have forgotten, when he permitted his people to be so fearfully distressed and afflicted. It is customary to ascribe affections to God, as men conclude from the event itself, that he is offended with them, or that he is reconciled. Now, as the human mind forms no conception of the divine mercy, except so far as it is presented and declared in his own word, Mary directs her own attention and that of others

61 “ ’Αντιλαμβάνεσθαι, denotes properly to *lay hold of any thing,* or person, by the hand, in order to support it when it is likely to fall; but the

to the promises,[62] and shows that, in the accomplishment of them, God has been true and faithful. In this sense, Scripture makes frequent mention of God's mercy and truth, (Micah 7:20;) because we shall never be convinced of his fatherly kindness toward us, unless his word, by which he hath bound himself to us, be present to our recollection, and unless it occupy, as it were, an interterm is here, as at Acts 20:35, and often in the classical writers, used metaphorically in the sense of to protect, support." — *Bloomfield.* mediate position between us, to link the goodness of God with our own individual salvation. By these words *Mary* shows, that the covenant which God had made with the fathers was of free grace; for she traces the salvation promised in it to the fountain of unmixed *mercy* Hence too we infer, that she was well acquainted with the doctrine of Scripture. The expectation of the Messiah was at that time, indeed, very general, but few had their faith established on so pure a knowledge of Scripture.

55. *To Abraham and to his seed* If you read these words in close connection with the close of the former verse, there appears to be an improper change of the case. Instead of τῶ ᾽Αβραὰμ καὶ τῶ σπέρματι, it ought to have been (πρὸς)τὸν ᾽Αβραὰμ καὶ τὸ σπέρμα„ *as he spake* TO *our fathers,* TO *Abraham and* TO *his seed*[63] But, in my opinion, there is no such close connection. Mary does not merely explain who the Fathers were to whom God spake, but extends the power and result of the promises to all his posterity, provided they are the true seed of Abraham. Hence it follows, that the matter now in hand is, the solemn covenant which had been made, in a peculiar manner, with Abraham and his descendants. For other promises, which had been given to Adam, and Noah, and others, referred indiscriminately to all nations. As many of the children of Abraham, according to the flesh, have been cut off by their unbelief, and have been thrown out as degenerate from the family of Abraham, so we, who were strangers, are admitted to it by faith, and regarded as the true seed of Abraham. Let us therefore hold that, in consequence of God having formerly *spoken to the fathers,* the grace offered to them belongs equally to their posterity; and also, that the adoption has been extended to all nations, so that those, who were not by nature children of Abraham, may be his spiritual *seed*

62 "Marie se propose les promesses, et nous ramene tous a la consideration d'icelles." — "Mary presents to herself the promises, and leads us all to the consideration of them."

63 Without attempting to make clear to the English reader the nature of this difficulty, which a Greek scholar will readily enough comprehend, it may suffice to say that the words, *as he spake to our fathers,* should be read as a parenthesis, and the words now under consideration will then be connected in the following manner: *So as to be mindful* (or, *in remembrance) of his mercy to Abraham, and to his seed, for ever. — Ed.*

LUKE 1:56-66

Luke 1:56-66
56. And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house. **57**. And Elisabeth's time of bringing forth was fulfilled, and she brought forth a son. **58**. And her neighbors and relatives heard, that the Lord had wonderfully exercised his mercy toward her, and they congratulated her. **59**. And it happened on the eighth day, when they came to circumcise the child, and they called him Zacharias, by the name of his father. **60**. And his mother answering said, [64] By no means, but he shall be called John. **61**. And they said to her, There is none among thy kindred who is called by that name. **62**. And they made signs to his father how he wished him to be called. **63**. And having asked for writing tables, he wrote, saying, John is his name: and all wondered. **64**. And his mouth was instantly opened, and he spake, blessing God. **65**. And fear fell upon all their neighbors, and in all the mountainous district of Judea all these words were made known. **66**. And all who had heard put them in their heart, saying, What (or Who) shall this child be? And the hand of the Lord was with him.

The amount of this narrative is, that the birth of John was distinguished by various miracles, which gave reason to expect, that something great and remarkable would appear in the child himself at a future period. For the Lord determined to confer upon him from the womb remarkable tokens, that he might not afterwards come forward, as an obscure and unknown person, from the crowd, to discharge the office of a Prophet. First Luke relates, that Mary remained about three months with her cousin, — or, in other words, till the birth of the child: for it is probable that she had no other reason for staying so long, but to enjoy the exhibition of divine grace, which had been suggested to her by the angel for the confirmation of her faith.

58. *And her neighbors and relatives heard* It may admit of doubt, whether the wonderful kindness of God was estimated by those persons from the simple fact of her being blessed with a child, or whether they had previously heard that an angel appeared to Zacharias, and promised to him a son. This was certainly no ordinary divine favor, that, out of the course of nature, a barren woman at a very advanced age had brought forth a child. It is possible that, on this ground alone, they magnified the divine goodness. On the eighth day, from a sense of duty or from courtesy, as is customary on such occasions, some people assemble; but God takes occasion from it to make them witnesses and spectators of his power and glory. There can be no doubt but the extraordinary birth brought a greater crowd. They had reckoned it a prodigy to see an old and barren woman suddenly become pregnant; and now that the child is born, their astonishment is renewed and increased. We infer from the words

64 "Mais sa mere print la parole;" — "but his mother took speech."

of Luke that, though they circumcised their children at home, they were not wont to do so without collecting a numerous assembly: and with good reason, for it was a common sacrament of the church, and it was not proper to administer it in a secret or private manner.

59. *And they called him Zacharias, by the name of his father* We know that names were originally given to men, either from some occurrence, or even by prophetic inspiration, to point out some secret work of God. After a long period, when there was such a profusion of names, that it became inconvenient to form new ones every day, people satisfied themselves with the old and received names, and called their children by the names of their ancestors. Thus before the father of John, there were many called Zacharias, and perhaps they were the descendants of the "*son of Barachias*," **(**Matthew 23:35**.)** Use and wont, we are aware, is generally taken for law, and so these persons contended that the prevailing custom should be observed as to the name of the child. Though we must not imagine that there is any sacredness in names, yet no judicious person will deny that, in this matter, believers ought to make a godly and profitable selection. They ought to give their children such names as may serve to instruct and admonish them, and consequently to take the names of holy fathers — for the purpose of exciting their children to imitate them — rather than adopt those of ungodly persons.

60. *And his mother answering said* It is uncertain if Elisabeth spoke this by inspiration. But when Zacharias saw the punishment inflicted on him for being too slow in believing, he probably informed his wife by writing what the angel had enjoined respecting the name, (ver. 13,) otherwise he would not have obeyed the command of God. Why this name was given to the Baptist by divine authority, I have already explained. The relatives, though unacquainted with the reason, are affected by the strangeness of the occurrence, particularly as they conjecture it did not take place without design.

64. *And his mouth was instantly opened* God puts honor on the birth of his prophet by restoring speech to his father: for there can be no doubt that this benefit was delayed till that day with the express object and design of fixing the eyes of men upon John. Zacharias *spake, blessing God* He did so, not only for the purpose of testifying his gratitude, but to inform his relatives and neighbors, that this punishment had been inflicted on him, because he had been too slow to believe: for he was not ashamed to unite with his own dishonor the praises of the divine glory. Thus it became universally known, that the birth of the child was not an accidental or ordinary event, but had been promised by an announcement from heaven.[65]

65. *And fear fell upon all* This fear mentioned by Luke proceeded from a feeling of the divine power: for the works of God ought to be contemplated by us with such reverence as

65 "Mais selon la promesse expresse de Dieu, qui avoit este apportee et revelee par l'ange." — "But according to the express promise of God, which had been brought and revealed by the angel."

to affect our minds with seriousness.[66] God does not amuse us with his miracles, but arouses the senses of men, which he perceives to be in a dormant state.[67] Luke says also that the report of those things was circulated *in all the mountainous district of Judea* And yet many derived no advantage from the temporary impression of the power of God: for, when John began to exercise his office as an instructor, there were few that remembered what wonders had attended his birth. It was not merely, however, for the sake of those who heard them, that God determined to spread abroad the report of those events, but to establish, in all ages, the certainty of the miracle, which was then universally known. Meanwhile, a general mirror of human ingratitude is here placed before our eyes: for, while trifling and frivolous occurrences remain firmly in our minds, those which ought to produce a constant recollection of divine favors immediately fade and disappear.

Luke does not speak of stupid men, or actual despisers of God: for he says that they *put them in their heart:* that is, they applied eagerly to the consideration of them. Some probably continued to remember, but the greater part rapidly shook off the fear which they had experienced. It deserves our notice that they were far from mistaking the design, when they interpreted the miracles which they saw as relating to the future excellence of the child: for such, we have said, was the design of God, that John should afterwards come forth with the highest reputation. *And the hand of the Lord was with him* The meaning is, that the grace of God was strikingly visible in many respects, and showed manifestly that he was not an ordinary person. It is a figurative mode of expression, and denotes that the power of God was as fully manifested as if his hand had been visibly seen, so that all readily acknowledged the presence of God.

66 "Que nous en soyons touchez et esmeus a bon escient." — "That we may be touched and moved by them in good earnest."

67 "Dieu en faisant miracles ne se joue point pour nous servir de passe- temps, mais reveille nos sens, lesquels il voit estre abrutis et en dormis." — "God, in working miracles, does not amuse himself to supply us with pastime, but arouses our senses, which he sees to be stupified and asleep."

LUKE 1:67-75

Luke 1:67-75
67. And Zacharias his father was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying: **68**. Blessed be the Lord God of israel, because he hath visited, and hath brought redemption to his people: **69**. And he hath raised up the horn [68] of salvation to us in the house of his servant David, (**70**. As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, who have been from every age,) [69] **71**. Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hated us: **72**. To perform the mercy to our fathers, and to have remembrance of his holy covenant, **73**. According to the oath, [70] which he sware to Abraham our father, to give to us, **74**. That, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we may serve him without fear, **75**. In holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

67. *Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost* We have lately explained this phrase to mean, that the servants of God received more abundantly the grace of the Spirit, of which, at other times, they were not destitute. Thus we read, that the Spirit was given to the prophets: not that on other occasions they wanted it, but that the power of the Spirit was more fully exerted in them, when the hand of God, as it were, brought them into public view, for the discharge of their office. We must observe, therefore, the manner in which Luke connects the two clauses: he *was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied* This implies that divine inspiration, at that time, rested upon him in an extraordinary measure, in consequence of which he did not speak like a man or private person, but all that he uttered was heavenly instruction. Thus also Paul connects prophecy with the Spirit.

"Quench not the Spirit: despise not prophesyings,"

(1 Thessalonians 5:19, 20.)

which teaches us that to despise instruction is to *"quench"* the light of "the Spirit." This was a remarkable instance of the goodness of God, that not only did Zacharias recover the power of speech, which he had not enjoyed for nine months, but his tongue became the organ of the Holy Spirit.

68. *Blessed be the Lord God* Zacharias commences with thanksgiving, and in the raptures of the prophetic spirit describes the fulfillment of the redemption formerly promised in Christ, on which the safety and prosperity of the church depended. The reason why *the Lord,* to whose government the whole world is subject, is here called *the God of Israel,* will more fully appear from what follows, that to the seed of Abraham, in a peculiar manner,

68 "La corne de salut."

69 "De tout temps." — "From all time."

70 "Secundum jusjurandum" — "(Qui est) le jurement," — "which is the oath."

the Redeemer had been promised. Since, therefore, God had deposited with one nation only his covenant, of which Zacharias was about to speak, he properly mentions the name of that nation, for which the grace of salvation was especially, or at all events in the first instance, designed.

The word ἐπεσκέψατο*, he hath visited,* contains an implied contrast: for the face of God had been turned away for a time from the unhappy children of Abraham. To such a depth of calamity had they sunk, and with such a mass of distresses were they overwhelmed, that no one entertained the thought that the eye of God was upon them. This visitation of God, which Zacharias mentions, is declared to be the cause and origin of redemption. The statement may be resolved in this manner. God *looked upon (*ἐπεσκέψατο*) his people, that he might redeem them* Now, as those whom God redeems must be prisoners, and as this redemption is spiritual in its nature, we conclude from this passage, that even the holy fathers were made free from the yoke of sin and the tyranny of death, only through the grace of Christ; for it is said that Christ was sent as a Redeemer to the holy and elect people of God. But it will be objected, if redemption was brought by Christ at that time when he appeared clothed in flesh, it follows, that those believers who died before he came into the world were "all their lifetime" slaves of sin and death: which would be highly absurd. I reply, the power and efficacy of that redemption, which was once exhibited in Christ, have been the same in all ages.

69. *He hath raised up the horn of salvation* That is, saving power:[71] for, when the throne of David was cast down, and the people scattered, the hope of salvation had to all appearance perished. Zacharias alludes to the predictions of the prophets, which hold out that a sudden revival would take place, when the state of affairs should have become melancholy and desperate. This mode of expression is borrowed from the passage,

"There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed,"

(Psalm 132:17.)

But if it is only in Christ that God has put forth his power to save us, we are not at liberty to depart from that method, if we desire to obtain salvation from God. Let it be also observed, that this *horn* brings *salvation* to believers, but terror to the ungodly, whom it scatters, or bruises and lays prostrate.

Of his servant David He is so denominated, not only because, like any one of the godly, he worshipped God, but for this other reason, that he was his chosen servant to rule and save his people, and thus to represent, along with his successors, the person and office of Christ. Though there remained among the Jews, at that time, no trace of a kingdom, Zacharias, resting on the promises of God, does not hesitate to call David the *servant* of

71 "C'est a dire, une vertu et puissance pleine de salut." — "That is, a power and might full of salvation

God, in whom God gave an example of the salvation which was to come.[72] Now that the throne of Christ is erected amongst us, that thence he may govern us, it follows that he is actually appointed to us the author of salvation.

70. *As he spake* That the salvation which is said to have been brought by Christ may not be thought doubtful on the score of novelty, he adduces as witnesses all the *Prophets,* who, though they were raised up at different times, yet with one consent teach, that salvation is to be expected from Christ alone. Nor was it the sole design of Zacharias to celebrate the truth and faithfulness of God, in performing and fulfilling what he formerly promised. His object rather was to draw the attention of believers to the ancient predictions, that they might embrace, with greater certainty and cheerfulness, the salvation offered to them, of which the Prophets from the beginning had testified. When Christ comes forth adorned,[73] with the testimonies of all the Prophets, our faith in him rests on a truly solid foundation.

He calls them *holy prophets,* to secure for their words greater authority and reverence. They were not inconsiderable or ordinary witnesses, but were of the first rank,[74] and furnished with a public commission, having been separated from the common people, for that purpose, by divine authority. To inquire minutely how each of the prophets gave testimony to Christ, would lead us into a long dissertation. Let it suffice for the present to say, that they all uniformly make the hope of the people, that God would be gracious to them, to rest entirely on that covenant between God and them which was founded on Christ, and thus speak plainly enough of the future redemption, which was manifested in Christ. To this purpose are many striking passages, which contain no dark prophecies respecting Christ, but point him out, as it were, with the finger. But our chief attention is due to the signature of the divine covenant; for he that neglects this will never understand any thing in the prophets: as the Jews wander wretchedly[75] in reading the Scripture, in consequence of giving their whole study to words, and wandering from the main design.

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72 "Specimen futurae salutis;" — "pource que Dieu l'avoit dresse pour figure et tesmoignage du salut a venir;" — "because God had set him up for a figure and proof of the salvation to come."

73 "Ornatus;" — "revestu et garni d'excellens tesmoignages de tous les Prophetes;" — "clothed and adorned with excellent testimonies of all the Prophets."

74 "Classicos testes." This is a fine allusion to the Roman division into *classes,* (mentioned by Livy, 1:43,) from the first of which classes, as carrying greater weight and respectability, "testes," *witnesses* were selected for signing Testaments, — a department of Conveyancing, which all civilized nations have guarded by the most careful provisions, and in which authenticity is peculiarly and indispensably necessary. Calvin's vernacular brings out, though with less elegance, the meaning in which *classicos testes* is here used, — "bons, suffisans, et sans reproche;" — "good, sufficient, and without reproach." — *Ed.*

75 "Misere vagantur." — "Les Juifs ne font que tracasser et se tormenter sans profit toute leur vie;" — "the Jews do but vex and tease themselves without advantage all their life."

71. *Salvation from our enemies* Zacharias explains more clearly the power and office of Christ. And certainly it would be of little or no advantage to learn that Christ was given to us, unless we also knew what he bestows. For this reason he states more fully the purpose for which the *horn of salvation* was *raised up:* that believers may obtain *salvation from their enemies* Unquestionably, Zacharias was well aware, that the principal war of the church of God is not with flesh and blood, but with Satan and all his armament, by which he labors to accomplish our everlasting ruin. Though the Church is also attacked by outward foes, and is delivered from them by Christ, yet, as the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, it is chiefly to Satan, the prince of this world, and all his legions, that the present discourse relates. Our attention is also directed to the miserable condition of men out of Christ, lying prostrate under the tyranny of the devil: otherwise, out of his hand, out of his power, Christ would not deliver his own people. This passage reminds us that, so long as the Church continues her pilgrimage in the world, she lives amongst her foes, and would be exposed to their violence, if Christ were not always at hand to grant assistance. But such is the inestimable grace of Christ, that, though we are surrounded on every side by enemies, we enjoy a sure and undoubted salvation. The mode of expression may seem harsh, *salvation from our enemies;* but the meaning is obvious. No machinations or power, no wiles, no attacks will prevent our being delivered from them and saved "in the Lord with an everlasting salvatlon," (Isaiah 45:17.)

72. *To perform the mercy* Zacharias again points out the fountain from which redemption flowed, the *mercy* and gracious *covenant* of God. He assigns the reason why God was pleased to save his people. It was because, being mindful of his promise, he displayed his mercy. He is said to have *remembrance of his covenant,* because there might be some appearance of forgetfulness during that long delay, in which he allowed his people to languish under the weight of very heavy calamities. We must carefully attend to this order. First, God was moved by pure mercy to make a covenant with the fathers. Secondly, He has linked the salvation of men with his own word.[76] Thirdly, He has exhibited in Christ every blessing, so as to ratify all his promises: as, indeed, their truth is only confirmed to us when we see their fulfillment in Christ. Forgiveness of sins is promised in the covenant, but it is in the blood of Christ. Righteousness is promised, but it is offered through the atonement of Christ. Life is promised, but it must be sought only in the death and resurrection of Christ. This too is the reason why God commanded of old, that the book of the law should be sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice, (Exodus 24:8; Hebrews 9:19, 20.) It is also worthy of notice, that Zacharias speaks of the mercy *performed* in his own age, as extending to the fathers who were dead, and who equally shared in its results. Hence it follows, that the grace and power

76 "Il a lie le salut des hommes avec sa parole, comme dependant d'icelle." — "He has bound the salvation of men with his word, as depending on it."

of Christ are not confined by the narrow limits of this fading life, but are everlasting; that they are not terminated by the death of the flesh, for the soul survives the death of the body, and the destruction of the flesh is followed by the resurrection. As neither Abraham, nor any of the saints, could procure salvation to himself by his own power or merits, so to all believers, whether living or dead, the same salvation has been exhibited in Christ.

73. *According to the oath* There is no word in the Greek original for the preposition *according to:* but it is a common and well understood principle of language, that when the accusative case is put absolutely, there is a preposition to be understood, by which it is governed. *The oath* is mentioned, for the purpose of expressing more fully the firmness and sacredness of his truth: for such is his gracious condescension, that he deigns to employ his name for the support of our weakness. If his bare promises do not satisfy us, let us at least remember this confirmation of them; and if it does not remove all doubt, we are chargeable with heinous ingratitude to God, and insult to his holy name.

To give to us Zacharias does not enumerate the several points of God's covenant, but shows that God's purpose, in dealing so kindly and mercifully with his people, was to redeem them.

74. *That being delivered out of the hand of our enemies* His purpose was, that, being redeemed, they might dedicate and consecrate themselves entirely to the Author of their salvation. As the efficient cause of human salvation was the undeserved goodness of God, so its final cause is, that, by a godly and holy life, men may glorify his name. This deserves careful attention, that we may remember our calling, and so learn to apply the grace of God to its proper use. We must meditate on such declarations as these:

"God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness,"

(1 Thessalonians 4:7.)

We are "redeemed with a great price," (1 Corinthians 6:20,) "the precious blood of Christ," (1 Peter 1:18,19,) not that we may serve "the lusts of the flesh," (2 Peter 2:18,) or indulge in unbridled licentiousness, but that Christ may reign in us. We are admitted by adoption into the family of God, that we, on our part, may yield obedience as children to a father. For "the kindness and love (φιλανθρωπία) of God our Savior toward man," (Titus 3:4,) "hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly," (Titus 2:11,12.) And so Paul, when he wishes powerfully to exhort believers to consecrate themselves to God, "in newness of life," (Romans 6:4,) and, "putting off, concerning the former conversation, the old man," (Ephesians 4:22,) to render to him a "reasonable service," "beseeches them by the mercies of God," (Romans 12:1.) Scripture is full of declarations of this nature, which show that we "frustrate the grace" (Galatians 2:21) of Christ, if we do not follow out this design.

That we may serve him without fear This deserves our attention: for it implies that we cannot worship God in a proper manner without composure of mind. Those who are ill at

ease, who have an inward struggle, whether God is favorable or hostile to them, whether he accepts or rejects their services,—in a word, who fluctuate in uncertainty between hope and fear, will sometimes labor anxiously in the worship of God, but never will sincerely or honestly obey him. Alarm and dread make them turn from him with horror; and so, if it were possible, they would desire that there were, "no God," (Psalm 14:1.) But we know, that no sacrifice is acceptable to God, which is not offered willingly, and with a cheerful heart. Before men can truly worship *God,* they must obtain peace of conscience, as David speaks, "There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared," (Psalm 130:4:) for those to whom God has given peace are graciously invited and led to approach him willingly and with a cheerful desire to worship him. Hence too Paul deduces that maxim, that "whatsoever is undertaken without faith is sin," (Romans 14:23.) But since God reconciles men to himself in Christ, since by his protection he keeps them safe from all fear, since he has committed their salvation to his own hand and guardianship, we are justly declared by Zacharias to be delivered by his grace from fear. And so the prophets describe it as peculiar to his reign, that,

"they shall sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid," (Micah 4:4.)

75. *In holiness and righteousness* As the rule of a good life has been reduced by God to two tables, (Exodus 31:18; 34:1,) so Zacharias here declares, that we serve God in a proper manner, when our life has been framed to *holiness and righteousness. Holiness,* beyond all question, denotes—as even Plato knew the duties of godliness,[77] which relate to the first table of the law. *Righteousness,* again, extends to all the duties of charity: for God requires nothing more from us in the second table of the law, than to render to every one what belongs to him. It is added, *before him,* to instruct believers, that it is not enough if their lives are decently regulated before the eyes of men, and their hands, and feet, and whole body, restrained from every kind of open wickedness: but they must live according to the will of God, who is not satisfied with professions of holiness, but looks chiefly on the heart.

Lastly, That no man may consider his duties to be at an end, when he has worshipped God for a certain period, Zacharias declares that men have been redeemed on the condition[78] that they shall continue to devote themselves to the worship of God *all the days of* their *life* And certainly, as redemption is eternal, the remembrance of it ought never to pass away; as God adopts men into his family for ever, their gratitude ought not to be transitory or of

77 "Le mot de *Sainctete* comprend tout ce dont nous sommes redevables a Dieu pour adorer et honorer sa majeste." — "The word *Holiness* includes all that we owe to God for adoring and honoring his majesty."

78 "Hac lege redemptas esse homines." — "Zacharie dit que les hommes ont este rachetez a *la charge* de s'appliquer a servir Dieu tout le temps de leur vie." — "Zacharias says that men have been redeemed upon condition of applying themselves to serve God *all the time of their life.*"

short continuance; and, in a word, as "Christ both died and rose, and revived" for them, it is proper that he should be "Lord both of the dead and living," (Romans 14:9.) So Paul, in a passage which I lately quoted, enjoins us to

"live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works,"

(Titus 2:12-14.)

LUKE 1:76-80

Luke 1:76-80
76. And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest. for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways, **77**. To give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins: **78**. Through the bowels of the mercy of our God, by which the Eastern sky [79] hath visited us, **79**. That he might give light to those who were sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. **80**. And the child grew, and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.

76. *And thou, child* Zacharias again returns to commend the grace of Christ, but does this, as it were, in the person of his son, by describing briefly the office to which he had been appointed as an instructor. Though in a little infant eight days old he does not yet observe prophetical endowments, yet turning his eyes to the purpose of God, he speaks of it as a thing already known. *To be called* means here to be *considered and openly acknowledged* as the prophet of God. A secret calling of God had already taken place. It only remained that the nature of that calling should be manifested to men. But as the name *Prophet* is general, Zacharias, following the revelation brought to him by the angel, affirms that he would be the usher[80] or herald of Christ. He says, *thou shalt go before the face of the Lord:* that is, thou shalt discharge the office of turning men by thy preaching to hear the Lord. The reason why John, when he had nearly finished his course, affirmed that he was not a *prophet* of God, is explained by me at the proper place, (John 1:21,) and in what manner he was *to prepare his ways* we shall afterwards see.

77. *To give knowledge of salvation* Zacharias now touches the principal subject of the gospel, when he says that the *knowledge of salvation* consists in *the forgiveness of sins*. As we are all "by nature the children of wraths" (Ephesians 2:3,) it follows, that we are by nature condemned and ruined: and the ground of our condemnation is, that we are chargeable with unrighteousness. There is, therefore, no other provision for escaping eternal death[81] but by God

"reconciling us unto himself, not imputing our trespasses unto us,"
(2 Corinthians 5:19.)

That this is the only righteousness which remains to us before God, may be easily gathered from the words of Zacharias. For whence comes salvation, but from righteousness?

79 "Oriens ex alto."

80 "Apparitorem." — "Heraut."

81 "Mortis;" — "La mort mortelle."

But if the children of God have no other way of obtaining the *knowledge of salvation* except *through the forgiveness of sins,* it follows, that righteousness must not be sought in any other quarter. Proud men attempt to forge and manufacture a righteousness out of the merits of good works. True righteousness is nothing else than the imputation of righteousness, when God, out of free grace, acquits us from guilt. Besides, it ought to be observed that Zacharias is not speaking of "strangers from the covenants of promise," (Ephesians 2:12) but of the people of God. Hence it follows, that not only does the commencement of righteousness depend on the *forgiveness of sins,* but it is by imputation[82] that believers are righteous before God to the very end: for they cannot appear before his tribunal in any other way than by betaking themselves daily to a free reconciliation.

78. *Through the bowels*[83] *of mercy* In so great a benefit Zacharias justly extols the mercy of God, and not satisfied with merely calling it the salvation which was brought by Christ, he employs more emphatic language, and says that it proceeded from the very *bowels of the mercy* of God. He then tells us metaphorically, that the great mercy of God has made the day to *give light to those who were sitting in darkness Oriens,* in the Latin version of this passage, is not a participle: for the Greek word is ἀνατολή, that is, the Eastern region, as contrasted with the West. Zacharias extols the *mercy* of God, as manifested in dispelling the darkness of death, and restoring to the people of God the light of life. In this way, whenever our salvation is the subject, we ought to raise our minds to the contemplation of the divine mercy. There appears to be an allusion to a prediction of Malachi, in which Christ is called "the Sun of Righteousness," and is said to "arise with healing in his wing," (Malachi 4:2,) that is, to bring health in his rays.

79. *That he might give light to those who were sitting in darkness* As to *light* and *darkness,* there are similar modes of expression in Isaiah: such as,

"The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined,"

(Isaiah 9:1;)

and in many other passages. These words show, that out of Christ there is no life-giving light in the world, but every thing is covered by the appalling darkness of death. Thus, in another passage, Isaiah testifies that this privilege belongs peculiarly to the church alone.

"Behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee,"

(Isaiah 60:2.)

82 "Imputative, ut italoquar." — "Par imputation, c'est a dire, d'autant que la justice de Christ laur est imputee." — "By imputation, that is to say, in so far as the righteousnes of Christ is imputed to them"

83 "Par les entrailles de la misericorde, ou, par l'affection misericordieuse." — "By the bowels of mercy, or, by the merciful affection."

But how could it be said that the Israelites, on whose hearts the Lord always shone by faith, *were sitting in the shadow of death?* I reply, the godly, who lived under the law were surrounded on every side by the darkness of death, and beheld at a distance, in the coming of Christ, the light that cheered and preserved them from being overwhelmed by present death. Zacharias may have had in view the wretched condition of his own age. But it is a general truth, that on all the godly, who had ever lived, or who were afterwards to live, there arose in the coming of Christ a light to impart life: for it even diffused life over the dead. To *sit* is of the same import as to *lie:*[84] and so Isaiah enjoins the Church, "Arise, for thy light is come," (Isaiah 60:1.)

To guide our feet By this expression Zacharias points out, that the highest perfection of all excellence and happiness is to be found in Christ alone. The word *Peace* might indeed be taken in its literal sense, which would not be unsuitable: for the illumination brought by Christ tends to pacify the minds of men. But as the Hebrew word ⌧⌧⌧⌧, *peace,* denotes every kind of prosperity, Zacharias intended, I doubt not, to represent Christ as the author of perfect blessedness, that we may not seek the smallest portion of happiness elsewhere, but may rest on Christ alone, from a full conviction that in him we are entirely and completely happy. To this purpose are those words of Isaiah,

"The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory," (Isaiah 60:19.)

But if the mere sight of his Son, while still a child, led Zacharias to discourse in so lofty a strain respecting the grace and power of Christ, before he was born, are not they so much the more ungrateful, who, now that Christ has died, and risen, and ascended to heaven, and sat down at his Father's right hand, speak disrespectfully of him and of his power, to which the Holy Spirit bore testimony, while he was still in his mother's womb? We must bear in mind what I have already mentioned, that Zacharias spake not from himself, but that the Spirit of God directed his tongue.

And the child grew This is added by Luke for continuing the thread of the history. *First,* he mentions that John *became strong in spirit:* which implies that the great and uncommon excellence of the child gave proof that there dwelt in him a Heavenly Spirit. Next, he tells us, that John remained unknown in the deserts *till the day of his showing,* that is, till the day on which the Lord had pur-posed to bring him into public view. Hence we conclude, that John, though he was fully aware of his calling, made no advances before the appointed time, but awaited the call of God.

84 "*Estre assis* emporte autant comme estre couch, ou veautre."— "To *sit* is of the same import as to be lying or wallowing."

MATTHEW 1:1-17; LUKE 3:23-38

Matthew 1:1-17	Luke 3:23-38
1. The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. **2**. And Abraham began Isaac. And Issac begat Jacob. And Jacob begat Judah and his brethren. **3**. And Judah begat Pharez and Zarah by Tamar. And Pharez begat Hezron. and Hezron begat Ram. **4**. And Ram begat Amminadab. And Amminadab begat Nahshon. And Nahshon begat Salma. **5**. And Salma begat Boaz by Rahab. And Boaz begat Obed by Ruth. And Obed begat Jesse. **6**. And Jesse begat David the king. And David the king begat Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah. **7**. And Solomon begat Rehoboam. And Rehoboam begat Abijah. And Abijah begat Asa. **8**. And Asa begat Jehoshaphat. And Jehoshaphat begat Jorem. And Joram begat Uzziah. **9**. And Uzziah begat Jotham. And Jotham begat Ahaz. And Ahaz begat Hezekiah. **10**. And Hezekiah begat Manasseh. And Manasseh begat Amon. And Amon begat Josiah. **11**. And Josiah begat Jeconiah and his brethren, about the Babylonish exile. **12**. And after the Babylonish exile, Jeconiah begat Salathiel. And Salathiel begat Zerubbabel. **13**. And Zerubbabel begat Abiud. And Abiud begat Eliakim. And Eliakim begat Azor. **14**. And Azor begat Zadok. And Zadok begat Achim. And Achim begat Eliud. **15**. And Eliud begat Eleazar. And Eleazar begat Matthan. And Matthan begat Jacob. **16**. And Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ. **17**. Therefore all the generations from Abraham till David are fourteen generations;	**23**. Jesus was supposed to be the son of Joseph, who was the son of Heli, **24**. Who was the son of Matthat, who was the son of Levi, who was the son of Melchi, who was the son of Janna, who was the son of Joseph, **25**. Who was the son of Matthias, who was the son of Amos, who was the son of Nahum, who was the son of Esli, who was the son of Nagge, **26**. Who was the son of Maath, who was the son of Mattahtias, who was the son of Semei, who was the son of Joseph, who was the son of Judah, **27**. Who was the son of Joanna, who was the son of Rhesa, who was the son of Zerubbabel, who was the son of Salathiel, who was the son of Neri, **28**. Who was the son of Melchi, who was the son of Addi, who was the son of Cosam, who was the son of Elmodam, who was the son, of Er, **29**. Who was the son of of Joses, who was the son of Eliezer, who was the son of Joriam, who was the son of Matthat, who was the son of Levi, **30**. Who was the son of Simeon, who was the son of Judah, who was the son of Joseph, who was the son of Jonan, who was the son of Eliakim, **31**. Who was the son of Meleah, who was the son of Mainan, who was the son of Mattatha, who was the son of Nathan, who was the son of David, **32**. Who was the son of Jesse, who was the son of Obed, who was the son of Boaz, who was the son of Salmah, who was the son of Nahshon, **33**. Who was the son of Amminadab, who was the son of Ram, who was the son of Hezron, who was the son of Pharez, who

and from David till the Babylonish migration are fourteen generations; and from the Babylonish migration till Christ are fourteen generations.	was the son of Judah, **34**. Who was the son of Jacob, who was the son of Isaac, who was the son of Abraham, who was the son of Terah, who was the son of Nahor, **35**. Who was the son of Serug, who was the son of Reu, who was the son of Peleg, who was the son of Heber, who was the son of Salah, **36**. Who was the son of Cainan, who was the son of Arphaxad, who was the son of Shem, who was the son of Noah, who was the son of Lamech, **37**. Who was the son of Methuselah, who was the son of Enoch, who was the son of Jared, who was the son of Mahalaleel, who was the son of Cainan, **38**. Who was the son of Enos, who was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the son of God.

As all are not agreed about these two genealogies, which are given by Matthew and Luke, we must first see whether both trace the genealogy of Christ from Joseph, or whether Matthew only traces it from Joseph, and Luke from Mary. Those who are of this latter opinion have a plausible ground for their distinction in the diversity of the names: and certainly, at first sight, nothing seems more improbable than that Matthew and Luke, who differ so widely from each other, give one and the same genealogy. For from David to Salathiel, and again from Zerubbabel till Joseph, the names are totally different.

Again, it is alleged, that it would have been idle to bestow so great pains on a thing of no use, in relating a second time the genealogy of Joseph, who after all was not the father of Christ. “Why this repetition,” say they, “which proves nothing that contributes much to the edification of faith? If nothing more be known than this, that Joseph was one of the descendants and family of David, the genealogy of Christ will still remain doubtful.” In their opinion, therefore, it would have been superfluous that two Evangelists should apply themselves to this subject. They excuse Matthew for laying down the ancestry of Joseph, on the ground, that he did it for the sake of many persons, who were still of opinion that he was the father of Christ. But it would have been foolish to hold out such an encouragement to a dangerous error: and what follows is at total variance with the supposition. For as soon as he comes to the close of the genealogy, Matthew points out that Christ was conceived in the womb of the virgin, not from the seed of Joseph, but by the secret power of the Spirit.

If their argument were good, Matthew might be charged with folly or inadvertence, in laboring to no purpose to establish the genealogy of Joseph.

But we have not yet replied to their objection, that the ancestry of Joseph has nothing to do with Christ. The common and well-known reply is, that in the person of Joseph the genealogy of Mary also is included, because the law enjoined every man to marry from his own tribe. It is objected, on the other hand, that at almost no period had that law been observed: but the arguments on which that assertion rests are frivolous. They quote the instance of the eleven tribes binding themselves by an oath, that they would not give a wife to the Benjamites, (Judges 21:1.) If this matter, say they, had been settled by law, there would have been no need for a new enactment. I reply, this extraordinary occurrence is erroneously and ignorantly converted by them into a general rule: for if one tribe had been cut off, the body of the people must have been incomplete if some remedy had not been applied to a case of extreme necessity. We must not, therefore, look to this passage for ascertaining the common law.

Again, it is objected, that Mary, the mother of Christ, was Elisabeth's cousin, though Luke has formerly stated that she was of the daughters of Aaron, (Luke 1:5.) The reply is easy. The daughters of the tribe of Judah, or of any other tribe, were at liberty to marry into the tribe of the priesthood: for they were not prevented by that reason, which is expressed in the law, that no woman should "remove her inheritance" to those who were of a different tribe from her own, (Numbers 36:6-9.) Thus, the wife of Jehoiada, the high priest, is declared by the sacred historian to have belonged to the royal family, —

"Jehoshabeath, the daughter of Jehoram,
the wife of Jehoiada the priest,"
(2 Chronicles 22:11.)

It was, therefore, nothing wonderful or uncommon, if the mother of Elisabeth were married to a priest. Should any one allege, that this does not enable us to decide, with perfect certainty, that Mary was of the same tribe with Joseph, because she was his wife, I grant that the bare narrative, as it stands, would not prove it without the aid of other circumstances.

But, *in the first place,* we must observe, that the Evangelists do not speak of events known in their own age. When the ancestry of Joseph had been carried up as far as David, every one could easily make out the ancestry of Mary. The Evangelists, trusting to what was generally understood in their own day, were, no doubt, less solicitous on that point: for, if any one entertained doubts, the research was neither difficult nor tedious.[85] Besides, they took for granted, that Joseph, as a man of good character and behavior, had obeyed the injunction of the law in marrying a wife from his own tribe. That general rule would not, indeed, be

85 "Il, leur estoit aise de le monstrer comme au doigt, et sans long ropos." — "It was easy for them to point it out, as with the finger, and without a long story."

sufficient to prove Mary's royal descent; for she might have belonged to the tribe of Judah, and yet not have been a descendant of the family of David.

My opinion is this. The Evangelists had in their eye godly persons, who entered into no obstinate dispute, but in the person of Joseph acknowledged the descent of Mary; particularly since, as we have said, no doubt was entertained about it in that age. One matter, however, might appear incredible, that this very poor and despised couple belonged to the posterity of David, and to that royal seed, from which the Redeemer was to spring. If any one inquire whether or not the genealogy traced by Matthew and Luke proves clearly and beyond controversy that Mary was descended from the family of David, I own that it cannot be inferred with certainty; but as the relationship between Mary and Joseph was at that time well known, the Evangelists were more at ease on that subject. Meanwhile, it was the design of both Evangelists to remove the stumbling-block arising from the fact, that both Joseph and Mary were unknown, and despised, and poor, and gave not the slightest indication of royalty.

Again, the supposition that Luke passes by the descent of Joseph, and relates that of Mary, is easily refuted; for he expressly says, that *Jesus was supposed to be the son of Joseph, etc.* Certainly, neither the father nor the grandfather of Christ is mentioned, but the ancestry of Joseph himself is carefully explained. I am well aware of the manner in which they attempt to solve this difficulty. The word *son,* they allege, is put for *son-in-law,* and the interpretation they give to Joseph being called *the son of Heli* is, that he had married Heli's daughter. But this does not agree with the order of nature, and is nowhere countenanced by any example in Scripture.

If Solomon is struck out of Mary's genealogy, Christ will no longer be Christ; for all inquiry as to his descent is founded on that solemn promise,

"I will set up thy seed after thee; I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son,"

(2 Samuel 7:12-14.)

"The Lord hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne,"

(Psalm 132:11.)

Solomon was, beyond controversy, the type of this eternal King who was promised to David; nor can the promise be applied to Christ, except in so far as its truth was shadowed out in Solomon, (1 Chronicles 28:5.) Now if the descent is not traced to him, how, or by what argument, shall he be proved to be "the son of David"? Whoever expunges Solomon from Christ's genealogy does at the same time, obliterate and destroy those promises by which he must be acknowledged to be the son of David. In what way Luke, tracing the line of descent from Nathan, does not exclude Solomon, will afterwards be seen at the proper place.

Not to be too tedious, those two genealogies agree substantially with each other, but we must attend to four points of difference. The *first* is; Luke ascends by a retrograde order, from the last to the first, while Matthew begins with the source of the genealogy. The *second* is; Matthew does not carry his narrative beyond the holy and elect race of Abraham,[86] while Luke proceeds as far as Adam. The *third* is; Matthew treats of his legal descent, and allows himself to make some omissions in the line of ancestors, choosing to assist the reader's memory by arranging them under three fourteens; while Luke follows the natural descent with greater exactness. The fourth and last is; when they are speaking of the same persons, they sometimes give them different names.

It would be superfluous to say more about the *first* point of difference, for it presents no difficulty. The *second* is not without a very good reason: for, as God had chosen for himself the family of Abraham, from which the Redeemer of the world would be born, and as the promise of salvation had been, in some sort, shut up in that family till the coming of Christ, Matthew does not pass beyond the limits which God had prescribed. We must attend to what Paul says,

"that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers,"

(Romans 15:8)

with which agrees that saying of Christ, "Salvation is of the Jews," (John 4:22.) Matthew, therefore, presents him to our contemplation as belonging to that holy race, to which he had been expressly appointed. In Matthew's catalogue we must look at the covenant of God, by which he adopted the seed of Abraham as his people, separating them, by a "middle wall of partition," (Ephesians 2:14,) from the rest of the nations. Luke directed his view to a higher point; for though, from the time that God had made his covenant with Abraham, a Redeemer was promised, in a peculiar manner, to his seed, yet we know that, since the transgression of the first man, all needed a Redeemer, and he was accordingly appointed for the whole world. It was by a wonderful purpose of God, that Luke exhibited Christ to us as the son of Adam, while Matthew confined him within the single family of Abraham. For it would be of no advantage to us, that Christ was given by the Father as "the author of eternal salvations" (Hebrews 5:9,) unless he had been given indiscriminately to all. Besides, that saying of the Apostle would not be true, that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever," (Hebrews 13:8,) if his power and grace had not reached to all ages from the very creation of the world. Let us know; therefore, that to the whole human race there has been manifested and exhibited salvation through Christ; for not without reason

86 "Matthieu, en sa description, ne passe point plus haut qu'Abraham, qui a este le pere du peuple sainct et esleu." — "Matthew, in his description, does not pass higher than Abraham, who was the father of the holy and elect people."

is he called the son of Noah, and the son of Adam. But as we must seek him in the word of God, the Spirit wisely directs us, through another Evangelist, to the holy race of Abraham, to whose hands the treasure of eternal life, along with Christ, was committed for a time, (Romans 3:1.)

We come now to the *third* point of difference. Matthew and Luke unquestionably do not observe the same order; for immediately after David the one puts Solomon, and the other, Nathan; which makes it perfectly clear that they follow different lines. This sort of contradiction is reconciled by good and learned interpreters in the following manner. Matthew, departing from the natural lineage, which is followed by Luke, reckons up the legal genealogy. I call it the *legal* genealogy, because the right to the throne passed into the hands of Salathiel. Eusebius, in the first book of his Ecclesiastical History, adopting the opinion of Africanus, prefers applying the epithet *legal* to the genealogy which is traced by Luke. But it amounts to the same thing: for he means nothing more than this, that the kingdom, which had been established in the person of Solomon, passed in a lawful manner to Salathiel. But it is more correct and appropriate to say, that Matthew has exhibited the legal order: because, by naming Solomon immediately after David, he attends, not to the persons from whom in a regular line, according to the flesh, Christ derived his birth, but to the manner in which he was descended from Solomon and other kings, so as to be their lawful successor, in whose hand God would "stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever," (2 Samuel 7:13.)

There is probability in the opinion that, at the death of Ahaziah, the lineal descent from Solomon was closed. As to the command given by David — for which some persons quote the authority of Jewish Commentators — that should the line from Solomon fail, the royal power would pass to the descendants of Nathan, I leave it undetermined; holding this only for certain, that the succession to the kingdom was not confused, but regulated by fixed degrees of kindred. Now, as the sacred history relates that, after the murder of Ahaziah, the throne was occupied, and all the seed-royal destroyed "by his mother Athaliah, (2 Kings 11:1,) it is more than probable that this woman, from an eager desire of power, had perpetrated those wicked and horrible murders that she might not be reduced to a private rank, and see the throne transferred to another. If there had been a son of Ahaziah still alive, the grandmother would willingly have been allowed to reign in peace, without envy or danger, under the mask of being his tutor. When she proceeds to such enormous crimes as to draw upon herself infamy and hatred, it is a proof of desperation arising from her being unable any longer to keep the royal authority in her house.

As to Joash being called "the son of Ahaziah," (2 Chronicles 22:11,) the reason is, that he was the nearest relative, and was justly considered to be the true and direct heir of the crown. Not to mention that Athaliah (if we shall suppose her to be his grandmother) would gladly have availed herself of her relation to the child, will any person of ordinary under-

standing think it probable, that an actual son of the king could be so concealed by "Jehoiada the priest," as not to excite the grandmother to more diligent search? If all is carefully weighed, there will be no hesitation in concluding, that the next heir of the crown belonged to a different line. And this is the meaning of Jehoiada's words,

"Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the Lord hath said of the sons of David,"

(2 Chronicles 23:3.)

He considered it to be shameful and intolerable, that a woman, who was a stranger by blood, should violently seize the scepter, which God had commanded to remain in the family of David.

There is no absurdity in supposing, that Luke traces the descent of Christ from Nathan: for it is possible that the line of Solomon, so far as relates to the succession of the throne, may have been broken off. It may be objected, that Jesus cannot be acknowledged as the promised Messiah, if he be not a descendant of Solomon, who was an undoubted type of *Christ* But the answer is easy. Though he was not naturally descended from Solomon, yet he was reckoned his son by legal succession, because he was descended from kings.

The *fourth* point of difference is the great diversity of the names. Many look upon this as a great difficulty: for from David till Joseph, with the exception of Salathiel and Zerubbabel, none of the names are alike in the two Evangelists. The excuse commonly offered, that the diversity arose from its being very customary among the Jews to have two names, appears to many persons not quite satisfactory. But as we are now unacquainted with the method, which was followed by Matthew in drawing up and arranging the genealogy, there is no reason to wonder, if we are unable to determine how far both of them agree or differ as to individual names. It cannot be doubted that, after the Babylonish captivity, the same persons are mentioned under different names. In the case of Salathiel and Zerubbabel, the same names, I think, were purposely retained, on account of the change which had taken place in the nation: because the royal authority was then extinguished. Even while a feeble shadow of power remained, a striking change was visible, which warned believers, that they ought to expect another and more excellent kingdom than that of Solomon, which had flourished but for a short time.

It is also worthy of remark, that the additional number in Luke's catalogue to that of Matthew is nothing strange; for the number of persons in the natural line of descent is usually greater than in the legal line. Besides, Matthew chose to divide the genealogy of Christ into three departments, and to make each department to contain fourteen persons. In this way, he felt himself at liberty to pass by some names, which Luke could not with propriety omit, not having restricted himself by that rule.

Thus have I discussed the genealogy of Christ, as far as it appeared to be generally useful. If any one is tickled[87] by a keener curiosity, I remember Paul's admonition, and prefer sobriety and modesty to trifling and useless disputes. It is a noted passage, in which he enjoins us to avoid excessive keenness in disputing about "genealogies, as unprofitable and vain," (Titus 3:9.)

It now remains to inquire, lastly, why Matthew included the whole genealogy of Christ in *three classes,* and assigned to each class fourteen persons. Those who think that he did so, in order to aid the memory of his readers, state a part of the reason, but not the whole. It is true, indeed, that a catalogue, divided into three equal numbers, is more easily remembered. But it is also evident that this division is intended to point out a threefold condition of the nation, from the time when Christ was promised to Abraham, to "the fullness of the time" (Galatians 4:4) when he was "manifested in the flesh," (1 Timothy 3:16.) Previous to the time of David, the tribe of Judah, though it occupied a higher rank than the other tribes, held no power. In David the royal authority burst upon the eyes of all with unexpected splendor, and remained till the time of Jeconiah. After that period, there still lingered in the tribe of Judah a portion of rank and government, which sustained the expectations of the godly till the coming of the Messiah.

1. *The book of the generation* Some commentators give themselves unnecessary trouble, in order to excuse Matthew for giving to his whole history this title, which applies only to the half of a single chapter. For this ἐπιγραφή, or *title,* does not extend to the whole book of Matthew: but the word βίβλος, *book,* is put for *catalogue:* as if he had said, "Here follows the catalogue of the generation of Christ." It is with reference to the promise, that Christ is called *the son of David, the son of Abraham:* for God had promised to Abraham that he would give him a seed, "in whom all the families of the earth should be blessed," (Genesis 12:3.) David received a still clearer promise, that God would "stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever," (2 Samuel 7:13;) that one of his posterity would be king "as long as the sun and moon endure," (Psalm 72:5;) and that "his throne should be as the days of heaven," (Psalm 89:29.) And so it became a customary way of speaking among the Jews to call Christ *the son of David*

2. *Jacob begat Judah and his brethren* While Matthew passes by in silence Ishmael, Abraham's first-born, and Esau, who was Jacob's elder brother, he properly assigns a place in the genealogy to the Twelve Patriarchs, on all of whom God had bestowed a similar favor of adoption. He therefore intimates, that the blessing promised in Christ does not refer to

87 "Si quem titillat major curiositas." — "S'il y a quelqu'un chatouille de curiosite qui en demande d'avantage." — "If any one is tickled by a curiosity, which asks for more of it."

the tribe of Judah alone, but belongs equally to all the children of Jacob, whom God gathered into his Church, while Ishmael and Esau were treated as strangers.[88]

3. *Judah begat Pharez and Zarah by Tamar* This was a prelude to that emptying of himself,[89] of which Paul speaks, (Philippians 2:7). The Son of God might have kept his descent unspotted and pure from every reproach or mark of infamy. But he came into the world to

> "empty himself, and take upon him the form of a servant,"
> (Philippians 2:7)

to be

> "a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people,"
> (Psalm 22:6)

and at length to undergo the accursed death of the cross. He therefore did not refuse to admit a stain into his genealogy, arising from incestuous intercourse which took place among his ancestors. Though Tamar was not impelled by lust to seek connection with her father-in-law, yet it was in an unlawful manner that she attempted to revenge the injury which she had received. Judah again intended to commit fornication, and unknowingly to himself, met with his daughter-in-law.[90] But the astonishing goodness of God strove with the sin of both; so that, nevertheless, this adulterous seed came to possess the scepter.[91]

6. *Begat David the King* In this genealogy, the designation of *King* is bestowed on David alone, because in his person God exhibited a type of the future leader of his people, the Messiah. The kingly office had been formerly held by Saul; but, as he reached it through tumult and the ungodly wishes of the people, the lawful possession of the office is supposed to have commenced with David, more especially in reference to the covenant of God, who promised that "his throne should be established for ever," (2 Samuel 7:16.) When the people shook off the yoke of God, and unhappily and wickedly asked a king, saying, "Give us a king to judge us," (1 Samuel 8:5,) Saul was granted for short time. But his kingdom was shortly afterwards established by God, as a pledge of true prosperity, in the hand of David. Let this expression, *David the King,* be understood by us as pointing out the prosperous condition of the people, which the Lord had appointed.

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88 "Quum essent extranei." — "En lieu qu'Ismael et Esau en avoyent este rejettez et bannis comme estrangers." — "Whereas Ishmael and Esau were thrown out and banished from it as strangers."

89 Ἀλλ ' ἑαυτὸν ἐχένωσε, — but he emptied himself. Such is the literal import of the words which are rendered in the English version, *But made himself of no reputation. — Ed.*

90 "In nurum suam incidit." — "Judas a commis sa meschancete avec sa bru, pensant que ce fust une autre." — "Judah committed his wickedness with his daughter-in-law, supposing her to be a different person"

91 "Afin que neantmoins ceste semence bastarde vint a avoir un jour en main le scepter Royal." — "So that nevertheless this bastard seed came to have one day in its hand the Royal scepter."

Meanwhile, the Evangelist adds a human disgrace, which might almost bring a stain on the glory of this divine blessing. *David the King begat Solomon by her that had been the wife of Uriah;* by Bathsheba, whom he wickedly tore from her husband, and for the sake of enjoying whom, he basely surrendered an innocent man to be murdered by the swords of the enemy, (2 Samuel 11:15.) This taint, at the commencement of the kingdom, ought to have taught the *Jews* not to glory in the flesh. It was the design of God to show that, in establishing this kingdom, nothing depended on human merits.

Comparing the inspired history with the succession described by Matthew, it is evident that he has omitted three kings.[92] Those who say that he did so through forgetfulness, cannot be listened to for a moment. Nor is it probable that they were thrown out, because they were unworthy to occupy a place in the genealogy of Christ; for the same reason would equally apply to many others, who are indiscriminately brought forward by Matthew, along with pious and holy persons. A more correct account is, that he resolved to confine the list of each class to fourteen kings, and gave himself little concern in making the selection, because he had an adequate succession of the genealogy to place before the eyes of his readers, down to the close of the kingdom. As to there being only thirteen in the list, it probably arose from the blunders and carelessness of transcribers. Epiphanius, in his First Book against Heresies, assigns this reason, that the name of Jeconiah had been twice put down, and unlearned[93] persons ventured to strike out the repetition of it as superfluous; which, he tells us, ought not to have been done, because Jehoiakim, the father of king Jehoiakim, had the name Jeconiah, in common with his son, (1 Chronicles 3:17; 2 Kings 24:15; Jeremiah 27:20; 28:4.) Robert Stephens quotes a Greek manuscript, in which the name of Jehoiakim is introduced.[94]

12. *After the Babylonish exile* That is, after the Jews were carried into captivity: for the Evangelist means, that the descendants of David, from being kings, then became exiles and slaves. As that captivity was a sort of destruction, it came to be wonderfully arranged by Divine providence, not only that the Jews again united in one body, but even that some vestiges of dominion remained in the family of David. For those who returned home submitted, of their own accord, to the authority of Zerubbabel. In this manner, the fragments of the royal scepter[95] lasted till the coming of Christ was at hand, agreeably to the prediction of Jacob, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet,

92 "Assavoir Ochozias fils de Joram, Joas, et Amazias." — "Namely, Ahaziah son of Jehoram, Joash, and Amaziah," (2 Chronicles 22, 23, 24, 25.)

93 "Indocti;" — "quelques gens n'entendans pas le propos," — "some peope not understanding the design."

94 "Robert Etienne a ce propos allegue un exemplaire Grec ancien, ou il y a ainsi, Josias engendra Joacim, et Joacim engendra Jechonias."— "Robert Stephens, with this view, quotes an ancient Greek manuscript, which runs thus: *Josiah begat Jehoiakim, and Jehoiakim begat Jeconiah.*"

95 "Qui avoit este mis bas, et comme rompu;" — "which had been thrown down, and, as it were, broken."

until Shiloh come," (Genesis 49:10.) And even during that wretched and melancholy dispersion, the nation never ceased to be illuminated by some rays of the grace of God. The Greek word μετοικεσία, which the old translator renders *transmigration,* and Erasmus renders *exile,* literally signifies *a change of habitation.* The meaning is, that the Jews were compelled to leave their country, and to dwell as "strangers in a land that was not theirs," (Genesis 15:13.)

16. *Jesus, who is called Christ* By the surname *Christ, Anointed,* Matthew points out his office, to inform the readers that this was not a private person, but one divinely *anointed* to perform the office of Redeemer. What that anointing was, and to what it referred, I shall not now illustrate at great length. As to the word itself, it is only necessary to say that, after the royal authority was abolished, it began to be applied exclusively to Him, from whom they were taught to expect a full recovery of the lost salvation. So long as any splendor of royalty continued in the family of David, the kings were wont to be called χριστοί, *anointed.*[96] But that the fearful desolation which followed might not throw the minds of the godly into despair, it pleased God to appropriate the name of *Messiah, Anointed,* to the Redeemer alone: as is evident from Daniel, (9:25, 26.) The evangelical history everywhere shows that this was an ordinary way of speaking, at the time when the Son of God was "manifested in the flesh," (1 Timothy 3:16.)

96 Every reader of the Bible is familiar with the phrase, *the Lord's anointed,* as applied to David and his successors, (2 Samuel 19:21; Lamentations 4:20.) — *Ed.*

MATTHEW 1:18-25

Matthew 1:18-25
18. Now the birth of Jesus Christ was in this manner. For when his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. **19**. And Joseph her husband, as he was a just man, and was unwilling to injure her reputation, intended to send her away secretly. **20**. And while he was considering these things, lo, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is by the Holy Spirit. **21**. And she shall bear a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS. For he shall save his people from their sins. **22**. Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, **23**. Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel: which, if one interprets it, means, God is with us. **24**. Then Joseph, being raised from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him, and took unto him his wife: **25**. And knew her not, till she brought forth her first-born son: and called his name JESUS.

18. *Now the birth of Jesus Christ* Matthew does not as yet relate the place or manner of Christ's birth, but the way in which his heavenly generation was made known to Joseph. First, he says that Mary *was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit* Not that this secret work of God was generally known: but the historian mixes up, with the knowledge of men,[97] the power of the Spirit, which was still unknown. He points out the time: *When she was espoused to Joseph,* and *before they came together* So far as respects conjugal fidelity, from the time that a young woman was betrothed to a man, she was regarded by the Jews as his lawful wife. When a "damsel betrothed to an husband" was convicted of being unchaste, the law condemned both of the guilty parties as adulterers:

"the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city;
and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbor's wife,"
(Deuteronomy 22:23, 24.)

The phrase employed by the Evangelist, *before they came together,* is either a modest appellation for conjugal intercourse, or simply means, "before they came to dwell together as husband and wife, and to make one home and family." The meaning will thus be, that the virgin had not yet been delivered by her parents into the hands of her husband, but still remained under their roof.

97 ("Qui voyoyent bien par signes externes que Marie estoit enceinte.") —("Who saw well by outward marks that Mary was pregnant.")

19. *As he was a just man* Some commentators explain this to mean, that Joseph, *because* he was a just man, determined to spare his wife:[98] taking *justice* to be only another name for humanity, or, a gentle and merciful disposition. But others more correctly read the two clauses as contrasted with each other: that Joseph *was a just man,* but yet that he was anxious about the reputation of his wife. That justice, on which a commendation is here bestowed, consisted in hatred and abhorrence of crime. Suspecting his wife of adultery, and even convinced that she was an adulterer, he was unwilling to hold out the encouragement of lenity to such a crime.[99] And certainly he is but a pander[100] to his wife, who connives at her unchastity. Not only is such wickedness regarded with abhorrence by good and honorable minds, but that winking at crime which I have mentioned is marked by the laws with infamy.

Joseph, therefore, moved by an ardent love *of justice,* condemned the crime of which he supposed his wife to have been guilty; while the gentleness of his disposition prevented him from going to the utmost rigor of law. It was a moderate and calmer method to depart privately, and remove to a distant place.[101] Hence we infer, that he was not of so soft and effeminate a disposition, as to screen and promote uncleanness under the pretense of merciful dealing: he only made some abatement from stern justice, so as not to expose his wife to evil report. Nor ought we to have any hesitation in believing, that his mind was restrained by a secret inspiration of the Spirit. We know how weak jealousy is, and to what violence it hurries its possessor. Though Joseph did not proceed to rash and headlong conduct, yet he was wonderfully preserved from many imminent dangers, which would have sprung out of his resolution to depart.

The same remark is applicable to Mary's silence. Granting that modest reserve prevented her from venturing to tell her husband, that *she was with child by the Holy Spirit,* it was not so much by her own choice, as by the providence of God that she was restrained. Let us suppose her to have spoken. The nature of the case made it little short of incredible. Joseph would have thought himself ridiculed, and everybody would have treated the matter as a laughing-stock: after which the Divine announcement, if it had followed, would have been of less importance. The Lord permitted his servant Joseph to be betrayed by ignorance into an erroneous conclusion, that, by his own voice, he might bring him back to the right path.

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98 "Que Joseph a voulu pardonner a sa femme, et couvrir la faute, d'autant qu'il estoit juste." — "That Joseph intended to forgive his wife, and conceal her offense, *because he was just."*

99 "Il ne vouloit point nourrir le mal en dissimulant et faisant semblant de n'y voir rien." — "He did not wish to encourage wickedness, by dissembling and pretending that he did not see it."

100 "Leno;" — "macquereau."

101 "Le moyen le plus doux et le moins scandaleux estoit, que secretement il departist du lieu, et la laissast sans faire aueun bruit." — "The mildest and least scandalous method was, that he should depart secretly from the place, and leave her without making any noise."

Yet it is proper for us to know, that this was done more on our account than for his personal advantage: for every necessary method was adopted by God, to prevent unfavorable suspicion from falling on the heavenly message. When the angel approaches Joseph, who is still unacquainted with the whole matter, wicked men have no reason to charge him with being influenced by prejudice to listen to the voice of God. He was not overcome by the insinuating address of his wife. His previously formed opinion was not shaken by entreaties. He was not induced by human arguments to take the opposite side. But, while the groundless accusation of his wife was still rankling in his mind, God interposed between them, that we might regard Joseph as a more competent witness, and possessing greater authority, as a messenger sent to us from heaven. We see how God chose to employ an angel in informing his servant Joseph, that to others he might be a heavenly herald, and that the intelligence which he conveyed might not be borrowed from his wife, or from any mortal.

The reason why this mystery was not immediately made known to a greater number of persons appears to be this. It was proper that this inestimable treasure should remain concealed, and that the knowledge of it should be imparted to none but the children of God. Nor is it absurd to say, that the Lord intended, as he frequently does, to put the faith and obedience of his own people to the trial. Most certainly, if any man shall maliciously refuse to believe and obey God in this matter, he will have abundant reason to be satisfied with the proofs by which this article of our faith is supported. For the same reason, the Lord permitted Mary to enter into the married state, that under the veil of marriage, till the full time for revealing it, the heavenly conception of the virgin might be concealed. Meanwhile, the knowledge of it was withheld from unbelievers, as their ingratitude and malice deserved.

20. *And while he was considering these things* We see here how seasonably, and, as we would say, at the very point, the Lord usually aids his people. Hence too we infer that, when he appears not to observe our cares and distresses, we are still under his eye. He may, indeed, hide himself, and remain silent; but, when our patience has been subjected to the trial, he will aid us at the time which his own wisdom has selected. How slow or late soever his assistance may be thought to be, it is for our advantage that it is thus delayed.

The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream This is one of two ordinary kinds of revelations mentioned in the book of Numbers, where the Lord thus speaks:

"If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speechess,"

(Numbers 12:6-8.)

But we must understand that dreams of this sort differ widely from natural dreams; for they have a character of certainty engraven on them, and are impressed with a divine seal, so that there is not the slightest doubt of their truth. The dreams which men commonly have, arise either from the thoughts of the *day,* or from their natural temperament, or from

bodily indisposition, or from similar causes: while the dreams which come from God are accompanied by the testimony of the Spirit, which puts beyond a doubt that it is God who speaks.

Son of David, fear not This exhortation shows, that Joseph was perplexed with the fear of sharing in the criminality of his wife, by enduring her adultery. The angel removes his suspicion of guilt, with the view of enabling him to dwell with his wife with a safe conscience. The appellation, *Son of David,* was employed on the present occasion, in order to elevate his mind to that lofty mystery; for he belonged to that family, and was one of the surviving few,[102] from whom the salvation promised to the world could proceed. When he heard the name of *David,* from whom he was *descended,* Joseph ought to have remembered that remarkable promise of God which related to the establishment of the kingdom, so as to acknowledge that there was nothing new in what was now told him. The predictions of the prophets were, in effect, brought forward by the angel, to prepare the mind of Joseph for receiving the present favor.

21. *And thou shalt call his name JESUS.* I have already explained briefly, but as far as was necessary, the meaning of that word. At present I shall only add, that the words of the angel set aside the dream of those who derive it from the essential name of God, Jehovah; for the angel expresses the reason why the Son of God is so called, *Because he shall SAVE his people;* which suggests quite a different etymology from what they have contrived. It is justly and appropriately added, they tell us, that Christ will be the author of salvation, because he is the Eternal God. But in vain do they attempt to escape by this subterfuge; for the nature of the blessing which God bestows upon us is not all that is here stated. This office was conferred upon his Son from the fact, from the command which had been given to him by the Father, from the office with which he was invested when he came down to us from heaven. Besides, the two words Ἰησοῦς and ⌧⌧⌧⌧, *Jesus* and *Jehovah,* agree but in two letters, and differ in all the rest; which makes it exceedingly absurd to allege any affinity whatever between them, as if they were but one name. Such mixtures I leave to the alchymists, or to those who closely resemble them, the Cabalists who contrive for us those trifling and affected refinements.

When the Son of God came to us clothed in flesh, he received from the Father a name which plainly told for what purpose he came, what was his power, and what we had a right to expect from him. for the name *Jesus* is derived from the Hebrew verb, in the Hiphil conjugation, ⌧⌧⌧⌧, which signifies *to save* In Hebrew it is pronounced differently, *Jehoshua;* but the Evangelists, who wrote in Greek, followed the customary mode of pronunciation;

102 "Quia esset ex ea familia, et quidem superstes cum paucis;" — "d'autant qu'il estoit de cette famille, et mesmes que d'icelle il estoit quasi seul vivant, avec quelques autres en bien petit nombre;" — "because he was of that family, and even of that he was almost sole survivor, with some others in very small number."

for in the writings of Moses, and in the other books of the Old Testament, the Hebrew word ⊠⊠⊠⊠, *Jehoshua,* or *Joshua,* is rendered by the Greek translators Ἰησοῦς, *Jesus* But I must mention another instance of the ignorance of those who derive — or, I would rather say, who forcibly tear — the name *Jesus* from *Jehovah* They hold it to be in the highest degree improper that any mortal man should share this name in common with the Son of God, and make a strange outcry that Christ would never allow his name to be so profaned. As if the reply were not at hand, that the name *Jesus* was quite as commonly used in those days as the name *Joshua* Now, as it is sufficiently clear that the name *Jesus* presents to us the Son of God as the Author of salvation, let us examine more closely the words of the angel.

He shall save his people from their sins The first truth taught us by these words is, that those whom Christ is sent to save are in themselves lost. But he is expressly called the Savior of the Church. If those whom God admits to fellowship with himself were sunk in death and ruin till they were restored to life by Christ, what shall we say of "strangers" (Ephesians 2:12) who have never been illuminated by the hope of life? When salvation is declared to be shut up in Christ, it clearly implies that the whole human race is devoted to destruction. The cause of this destruction ought also to be observed; for it is not unjustly, or without good reason, that the Heavenly Judge pronounces us to be accursed. The angel declares that we have perished, and are overwhelmed by an awful condemnation, because we stand excluded from life by our sins. Thus we obtain a view of our corruption and depravity; for if any man lived a perfectly holy life, he might do without Christ as a Redeemer. But all to a man need his grace; and, therefore, it follows that they are the slaves of sin, and are destitute of true righteousness.

Hence, too, we learn in what way or manner Christ saves; he delivers us from sins This deliverance consists of two parts. Having made a complete atonement, he brings us a free pardon, which delivers us from condemnation to death, and reconciles us to God. Again, by the sanctifying influences of his Spirit, he frees us from the tyranny of Satan, that we may live "unto righteousness," (1 Peter 2:24.) Christ is not truly acknowledged as a Savior, till, on the one hand, we learn to receive a free pardon of our sins, and know that we are accounted righteous before God, because we are free from guilt; and till, on the other hand, we ask from him the Spirit of righteousness and holiness, having no confidence whatever in our own works or power. By Christ's *people* the angel unquestionably means the Jews, to whom he was appointed as Head and King; but as the Gentiles were shortly afterwards to be ingrafted into the stock of Abraham, (Romans 11:17,) this promise of *salvation* is extended indiscriminately to all who are incorporated by faith in the "one body" (1 Corinthians 12:20) of the Church.

22. *Now all this was done* It is ignorant and childish trifling to argue, that the name *Jesus* is given to the Son of God, because he is called *Immanuel* For Matthew does not confine this assertion to the single fact of the name, but includes whatever is heavenly and divine

in the conception of Christ; and that is the reason why he employs the general term *all* We must now see how appropriately the prediction of Isaiah is applied. It is a well-known and remarkable passage, (Isaiah 7:14,) but perverted by the Jews with their accustomed malice; though the hatred of Christ and of truth, which they thus discover, is as blind and foolish as it is wicked. To such a pitch of impudence have many of their Rabbins proceeded, as to explain it in reference to King Hezekiah, who was then about fifteen years of age. And what, I ask, must be their rage for lying, when, in order to prevent the admission of clear light, they invert the order of nature, and shut up a youth in his mother's womb, that he may be born sixteen years old? But the enemies of Christ deserve that God should strike them with a spirit of giddiness and insensibility, should

"pour out upon them a spirit of deep sleep and close their eyes,"

(Isaiah 29:10.)

Others apply it to a creature of their own fancy, some unknown son of Ahaz, whose birth Isaiah predicted. But with what propriety was he called *Immanuel,* or the land subjected to his sway, who closed his life in a private station and without honor? for shortly afterwards the prophet tells us that this child, whoever he was, would be ruler of the land. Equally absurd is the notion that this passage relates to the prophet's son. On this subject we may remark, that Christian writers have very strangely misapprehended the prediction contained in the next chapter, by applying it to Christ. The prophet there says, that, instructed by a vision, he "went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son," and that the child whom she bore was named by Divine command, "Maher-shalal-hash-baz," "Making speed to the spoil, hasten the prey," (Isaiah 8:3.) All that is there described is approaching war, accompanied by fearful desolation; which makes it very manifest that the subjects are totally different.

Let us now, therefore, investigate the true meaning of this passage. The city of Jerusalem is besieged. Ahaz trembles, and is almost dead with terror. The prophet is sent to assure him that God will protect the city. But a simple promise is not sufficient to compose his agitated mind. The prophet is sent to him, saying,

"Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God;
ask it either in the depth, or in the height above,"

(Isaiah 7:11.)

That wicked hypocrite, concealing his unbelief, disdains to ask a sign. The prophet rebukes him sharply, and at length adds,

"The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel,"

(Isaiah 7:14.)

We expound this as relating to Christ in the following manner: "You, the whole posterity of David, as far as lies in your power, endeavor to nullify the grace which is promised to

you;" (for the prophet expressly calls them, by way of disgrace, the *house of David,* Isaiah 7:13;) "but your base infidelity will never prevent the truth of God from proving to be victorious. God promises that the city will be preserved safe and unhurt from its enemies. If his word is not enough, he is ready to give you the confirmation of such a sign as you may demand. You reject both favors, and spurn them from you; but God will remain steady to his engagement. For the promised Redeemer will come, in whom God will show himself to be fully present to his people."

The Jews reply, that Isaiah would have been at variance with everything like reason or probability, if he had given to the men of that age a sign, which was not to be exhibited till after the lapse of nearly eight hundred years. And then they assume the airs of haughty triumph,[103] as if this objection of the Christians had originated in ignorance or thoughtlessness, and were now forgotten and buried. But the solution, I think, is easy; provided we keep in view that a covenant of adoption was given to the Jews, on which the other acts of the divine kindness depended. There was then a general promise, by which God adopted the children of Abraham as a nation, and on which were founded all the special promises. Again, the foundation of this covenant was the Messiah. Now we hold, that the reason for delivering the city was, that it was the sanctuary of God, and out of it the Redeemer would come. But for this, Jerusalem would a hundred times have perished.

Let pious readers now consider, when the royal family had openly rejected the sign which God had offered to them, if it was not suitable that the prophet should pass all at once to the Messiah, and address them in this manner: "Though this age is unworthy of the deliverance of which God has given me a promise, yet God is mindful of his covenant, and will rescue this city from its enemies. While he grants no particular sign to testify his grace, this one sign ought to be deemed more than sufficient to meet your wishes. from the stock of David the Messiah will arise." Yet it must be observed that, when the prophet reminds unbelievers of the general covenant, it is a sort of reproof, because they did not accept of a particular sign. I have now, I think, proved that, when the door was shut against every kind of miracle, the prophet made an appropriate transition to Christ, for the purpose of leading unbelievers to reflect, that the only cause of the deliverance was the covenant that had been made with their fathers. And by this remarkable example has God been pleased to testify to all ages, that he followed with uninterrupted kindness the children of Abraham, only because in Christ, and not through their own merits, he had made with them a gracious covenant.

There is another piece of sophistry by which the Jews endeavor to parry our argument. Immediately after the words in question, the prophet adds:

"Before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings,"

103 "Faisant grand cas de leur argument;" — "setting great store by their argument."

(Isaiah 7:16.)

Hence they infer, that the promised birth of the child would be delayed for a very short time; otherwise, it would not agree with the rapidly approaching change of the kingdoms, which, the prophet annouueed, would take place before that child should have passed half the period of infancy. I reply, when Isaiah has given a sign of the future Savior, and declared that a child will be born, who is the true *Immanuel,* or — to use Paul's language — *God manifest in the flesh,* (1 Timothy 3:16,) he proceeds to speak, in general terms, of all the children of his own time. A strong proof of this readily presents itself; for, after having spoken of the general promise of God, he returns to the special promise, which he had been commissioned to declare. The former passage, which relates to a final and complete redemption, describes one particular child, to whom alone belongs the name of God; while the latter passage, which relates to a special benefit then close at hand, determines the time by the childhood of those who were recently born, or would be born shortly afterwards.

Hitherto, if I mistake not, I have refuted, by strong and conclusive arguments, the calumnies of the Jews, by which they endeavor to prevent the glory of Christ from appearing, with resplendent luster, in this prediction. It now remains for us to refute their sophistical reasoning about the Hebrew word ⊠⊠⊠⊠, *virgin*[104] They wantonly persecute Matthew for proving that Christ was born of a virgin,[105] while the Hebrew noun merely signifies *a young woman;* and ridicule us for being led astray by the wrong translation[106] of a word, to believe that he was born by the Holy Spirit, of whom the prophet asserts no more than that he would be the son of a young woman. And, first, they display an excessive eagerness for disputation, by laboring[107] to prove that a word, which is uniformly applied in Scripture to *virgins,* denotes here a young woman who had known a man. The etymology too agrees with Matthew's translation of the word: for it means *hiding,*[108] which expresses the modesty that becomes a virgin.[109] They produce a passage from the book of Proverbs, "the way of a man with a maids," ⊠⊠⊠⊠, (Proverbs 30:19.) But it does not at all support their views. Solomon speaks

104 "Le mot Hebrieu *Alma,* pour lequel l'Evangeliste a use du mot de Vierge;" — "the Hebrew word *Alma,* for which the Evangelist has used the word Virgin."

105 "Le blamant de ce qu'il pretend prouver Jesus Christ estre nay d'une Vierge;" — "blaming him for offering to prove Jesus Christ to be born of a Virgin."

106 "Abusez par un mot mal tourne;" — "deceived by a word ill translated."

107 "Urgent;" — "ils veulent a toute force;" — "they attempt with their whole strength."

108 ⊠⊠⊠ is derived from ⊠⊠, *to hide,—a* verb not found in Kal, but so frequently in Niphal, (⊠⊠⊠,) Hiphil, (⊠⊠⊠⊠,) Hithpahel, (⊠⊠⊠⊠,) that its meaning is fully ascertained. — *Ed.*

109 "Car il emporte Retraitte ou Cachette, qui est pour denoter ceste honte honeste qui doit estre es vierges;" — "for it signifies Retreat or Concealment, which serves to denote that becoming shame which ought to be in virgins."

there of a young woman who has obtained the affections of a young man: but it does not follow as a matter of course, that the young man has seduced the object of his regard; or rather, the probability leans much more strongly to the other side.[110]

But granting all that they ask as to the meaning of the word, the subject demonstrates, and compels the acknowledgment, that the prophet is speaking of a miraculous and extraordinary birth. He exclaims that he is bringing a sign from the Lord, and not an ordinary sign, but one superior to every other.

The Lord himself shall give you a sign.
Behold, a virgin shall conceive,
(Isaiah 7:14.)

If he were only to say, that a woman would bear a child, how ridiculous would that magnificent preface have been? Thus we see, that the insolence of the Jews exposes not only themselves, but the sacred mysteries of God, to scorn.

Besides, a powerful argument may be drawn from the whole strain of the passage. *Behold, a virgin shall conceive* Why is no mention made of a man? It is because the prophet draws our attention to something very uncommon. Again, the virgin is commanded to name the child. *Thou shalt call his name Immanuel* In this respect, also, the prophet expresses something extraordinary: for, though it is frequently related in Scripture, that the names were given to children by their mothers, yet it was done by the authority of the fathers. When the prophet addresses his discourse to the virgin, he takes away from men, in respect to this child, that authority which is conferred upon them by the order of nature. Let this, therefore, be regarded as an established truth, that the prophet here refers to a remarkable miracle of God, and recommends it to the attentive and devout consideration of all the godly, — a miracle which is basely profaned by the Jews, who apply to the ordinary method of conception what is said in reference to the secret power of the Spirit.

23. *His name Immanuel* The phrase, *God is with us,* is no doubt frequently employed in Scripture to denote, that he is present with us by his assistance and grace, and displays the power of his hand in our defense. But here we are instructed as to the *manner* in which God communicates with men. For out of Christ we are alienated from him; but through Christ we are not only received into his favor, but are made one with him. When Paul says, that the Jews under the law *were nigh* to God, (Ephesians 2:17,) and that a deadly *enmity* (Ephesians 2:15) subsisted between him and the Gentiles, he means only that, by shadows and figures, God then gave to the people whom he had adopted the tokens of his presence. That promise was still in force, "The Lord thy God is among you," (Deuteronomy 7:21,) and, "This is my rest for ever," (Psalm 132:14.) But while the familiar intercourse between

110 "C'est bien autrement: car il y a plus d'apparence au contraire;"— "it is quite otherwise: for there is more probability on the opposite side.

God and the people depended on a Mediator, what had not yet fully taken place was shadowed out by symbols. His seat and residence is placed "between the Cherubim," (Psalm 80:1,) because the ark was the figure and visible pledge of his glory.

But in Christ the actual presence of God with his people, and not, as before, his shadowy presence, has been exhibited.[111] This is the reason, why Paul says, that "in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," (Colossians 2:9.) And certainly he would not be a properly qualified Mediator, if he did not unite both natures in his person, and thus bring men into an alliance with God. Nor is there any force in the objection, about which the Jews make a good deal of noise, that the name of God is frequently applied to those memorials, by which he testified that he was present with believers.

For it cannot be denied, that this name, *Immanuel,* contains an implied contrast between the presence of God, as exhibited in Christ, with every other kind of presence, which was manifested to the ancient people before his coming. If the reason of this name began to be actually true, when Christ appeared in the flesh, it follows that it was not completely, but only in part, that God was formerly united with the Fathers.

Hence arises another proof, that Christ is *God manifested in the flesh,* (1 Timothy 3:16.) He discharged, indeed, the office of Mediator from the beginning of the world; but as this depended wholly on the latest revelation, he is justly called Immanuel at that time, when clothed, as it were, with a new character, he appears in public as a Priest, to atone for the sins of men by the sacrifice of his body, to reconcile them to the Father by the price of his blood, and, in a word, to fulfill every part of the salvation of men.[112] The first thing which we ought to consider in this name is the divine majesty of Christ, so as to yield to him the reverence which is due to the only and eternal God. But we must not, at the same time, forget the fruit which God intended that we should collect and receive from this name. For whenever we contemplate the one person of Christ as God-man, we ought to hold it for certain that, if we are united to Christ by faith, we possess God.

In the words, *they shall call,* there is a change of the number. But this is not at all at variance with what I have already said. True, the prophet addresses the virgin alone, and therefore uses the second person, *Thou shalt call* But from the time that this name was

111 "Mais quand Christ est apparu en sa personne, le peuple a eu une presence de Dieu veritable, et non pas ombratile comme paravant."— "But when Christ appeared in his person, the people had a real presence of God, and not shadowy, as before."

112 "Somme, pour faire et accomplir toutes choses requises au salut du genre humain;" — "in a word, to do and accomplish all things requisite for the salvation of the human race."

published, all the godly have an equal right to make this confession, that God has given himself to us to be enjoyed in Christ.[113]

24. *Joseph, being raised from sleep* The ready performance, which is here described, serves not less to attest the certainty of Joseph's faith, than to commend his obedience. For, if every scruple had not been removed, and his conscience fully pacified, he would never have proceeded so cheerfully, on a sudden change of opinion, *to take unto him his wife,* whose society, he lately thought, would pollute him.[114] The dream must have carried some mark of Divinity, which did not allow his mind to hesitate. Next followed the effect of faith. Having learned the will of God, he instantly prepared himself to obey.

25. *And knew her not* This passage afforded the pretext for great disturbances, which were introduced into the Church, at a former period, by Helvidius. The inference he drew from it was, that Mary remained a virgin no longer than till her first birth, and that afterwards she had other children by her husband. Jerome, on the other hand, earnestly and copiously defended Mary's perpetual virginity. Let us rest satisfied with this, that no just and well-grounded inference can be drawn from these words of the Evangelist, as to what took place after the birth of Christ. He is called *first-born;* but it is for the sole purpose of informing us that he was born of a virgin.[115] It is said that Joseph *knew her not till she had brought forth her first-born son:* but this is limited to that very time. What took place afterwards, the historian does not inform us. Such is well known to have been the practice of the inspired writers. Certainly, no man will ever raise a question on this subject, except from curiosity; and no man will obstinately keep up the argument, except from an extreme fondness for disputation.

113 "Il appartient a tous fideles d'advouer et confesser que Dieu s'est communique et baille a nous en Christ;" — "it belongs to all believers to own and confess that God has communicated and made over himself to us in Christ."

114 "Laquelle un peu auparavant il ne vouloit recevoir, et lui sembloit qu'il se fust pollue en conversant avec elle;" — "whom a little before he refused to receive, and seemed to him that he would be polluted by conversing with her."

115 "Il est nomme *Premier nay,* mais non pour autre raison, sinon afin que nous sachions qu'il est nay d'une mere vierge, et qui jamais n'avoit eu enfant;" — "he is called *First-born,* but for no other reason than that we may know that he was born of a pure virgin, and who never had had a child."

LUKE 2:1-7

Luke 2:1-7
1. Now it happened in those days, an edict came out from Augustus Caesar, that the whole world should be registered. [116] **2**. This first registration [117] was made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. **3**. And all went to make the return, [118] each in his own city. **4**. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, into the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, (because he was of the house and lineage of David,) **5**. To make the return with Mary [119] his betrothed wife, who was pregnant. **6**. And it happened while they were there, the days of bringing forth were fulfilled. [120] **7**. And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in bandages, [121] and laid him in a manger; [122] because there was no room for them in the inn.

Luke relates how it happened, that Christ was born in the city of Bethlehem, as his mother was living at a distance from her home, when she was approaching to her confinement. And first he sets aside the idea of human contrivance,[123] by saying, that Joseph and Mary had left home, and came to that place to make the return according to their family and tribe. If intentionally and on purpose[124] they had changed their residence that Mary might bring forth her child in Bethlehem, we would have looked only at the human beings concerned. But as they have no other design than to obey the edict of Augustus, we readily acknowledge, that they were led like blind persons, by the hand of God, to the place where Christ must be born. This may appear to be accidental, as everything else, which does not proceed from a direct human intention, is ascribed by irreligious men to Fortune. But we must not attend merely to the events themselves. We must remember also the prediction which was uttered by the prophet many centuries before. A comparison will clearly show it to have been accomplished by the wonderful Providence of God, that a registration was

116 "Mis par escrit;" — "put in writing."

117 "Ceste premiere description."

118 "Ut profiteretur."

119 "Pour estre enroule avec Marie;" — "to be enrolled with Mary."

120 "Et comme ils estoyent la, advint que les jours d'icelle furent accom-. plis pour enfanter." — "And as they were there, it happened that her days were accomplished for bringing forth."

121 "Fasciis;" — "Bandelettes."

122 "Une creiche."

123 "Il monstre que cela ne s'est point fait par advis ou conseil humain." —"He shows that this was not by human advice or plan."

124 "Data opera et consulto;" — "de propos delibere;" — "of deliberate purpose."

then enacted by Augustus Caesar, and that Joseph and Mary set out from home, so as to arrive in Bethlehem at the very point of time.

Thus we see that the holy servants of God, even though they wander from their design, unconscious where they are going, still keep the right path, because God directs their steps. Nor is the Providence of God less wonderful in employing the mandate of a tyrant to draw Mary from home, that the prophecy may be fulfilled. God had marked out by his prophet — as we shall afterwards see — the place where he determined that his Son should be born. If Mary had not been constrained to do otherwise, she would have chosen to bring forth her child at home. Augustus orders a registration to take place in Judea, and each person to give his name, that they may afterwards pay an annual tax, which they were formerly accustomed to pay to God. Thus an ungodly man takes forcible possession of that which God was accustomed to demand from his people. It was, in effect, reducing the Jews to entire subjection, and forbidding them to be thenceforth reckoned as the people of God.

Matters have been brought, in this way, to the last extremity, and the Jews appear to be cut off and alienated for ever from the covenant of God. At that very time does God suddenly, and contrary to universal expectation, afford a remedy. What is more, he employs that wicked tyranny for the redemption of his people. For the governor, (or whoever was employed by Caesar for the purpose,) while he executes the commission entrusted to him, is, unknown to himself, God's herald, to call Mary to the place which God had appointed. And certainly Luke's whole narrative may well lead believers to acknowledge, that Christ was led by the hand of God "from his mother's belly," (Psalm 22:10.) Nor is it of small consequence[125] to the certainty of faith to know, that Mary was drawn suddenly, and contrary to her own intention, to Bethlehem, that "out of it might come forth" (Micah 5:2) the Redeemer, as he had been formerly promised.

1. *The whole world* This figure of speech[126] (by which the whole is taken for a part, or a part for the whole) was in constant use among the Roman authors, and ought not to be reckoned harsh. That this registration might be more tolerable and less odious, it was extended equally, I have no doubt, to all the provinces; though the rate of taxation may have been different. I consider *this first registration* to mean, that the Jews, being completely subdued, were then loaded with a new and unwonted yoke. Others read it, that this registration *was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria;*[127] but there is no probability in that view. The tax was, indeed, annual; but the registration did not take place every year. The meaning is, that the Jews were far more heavily oppressed than they had formerly been.

125 "Neque parum facit;" — "ce n'est pas un poinct de petite importance."

126 "Synecdoche."

127 The reader will observe that this is the rendering of the authorized English version. — *Ed.*

There is a diversity as to the name of the Proconsul. Some call him *Cyrenius,* (Κυρήνιος,) and others, *Quirinus* or *Quirinius* But there is nothing strange in this;for we know that the Greeks, when they translate Latin names, almost always make some change in the pronunciation. But a far greater difficulty springs up in another direction. Josephus says that, while Archelaus was a prisoner at Vienna, (Ant. 17:13. 2,) Quirinus came as Proconsul, with instructions to annex Judea to the province of Syria, (xviii. 1.1.) Now, historians are agreed, that Archelaus reigned nine years after the death of his father Herod. It would therefore appear, that there was an interval of about thirteen years between the birth of Christ and this registration; for almost all assent to the account given by Epiphanius, that Christ was born in the thirty-third year of Herod: that is, four years before his death.

Another circumstance not a little perplexing is, that the same Josephus speaks of this registration as having happened in the thirty-seventh year after the victory at Actium,[128] (Ant. 18:2. 1.) If this be true, Augustus lived, at the utmost, not more than seven years after this event; which makes a deduction of eight or nine years from his age: for it is plain from the third chapter of Luke's Gospel, that he was at that time only in his fifteenth year. But, as the age of Christ is too well known to be called in question, it is highly probable that, in this and many other passages of Josephus's History, his recollection had failed him. Historians are agreed that Quirinus was Consul nineteen years, or thereby, before the victory over Antony, which gave Augustus the entire command of the empire: and so he must have been sent into the province at a very advanced age. Besides, the same Josephus enumerates four governors of Judea within eight years; while he acknowledges that the fifth was governor for fifteen years. That was Valerius Gratus, who was succeeded by Pontius Pilate.

Another solution may be offered. It might be found impracticable to effect the registration immediately after the edict had been issued: for Josephus relates, that Coponius was sent with an army to reduce the Jews to subjection, (Ant. 18:2.2) from which it may easily be inferred, that the registration was prevented, for a time, by popular tumult. The words of Luke bear this sense, that, about the time of our Lord's birth, an edict came out to have the people registered, but that the registration could not take place till after a change of the kingdom, when Judea had been annexed to another province. This clause is accordingly added by way of correction. *This first registration was made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria* That is, it was then first carried into effect. [129]

128 "Victoriae Actiacae." — "C'est une victoire qu'ent Auguste a la bataille sur mer contre Antoine et Cleopatra, aupres de la ville nommee Actium." — "That is, a victory which Augustus had in the naval battle which he fought against Antony and Cleopatra, near the town called Actium."

129 "Elle fut lors executee, et trouva-on facon d'en venir a bout." — "It was then executed, and a way was found of succeeding in it."

But the whole question is not yet answered: for, while Herod was king of Judea, what purpose did it serve to register a people who paid no tribute to the Roman Empire? I reply: there is no absurdity in supposing that Augustus, by way of accustoming the Jews to the yoke, (for their obstinacy was abundantly well-known,) chose to have them registered, even under the reign of Herod.[130] Nor did Herod's peculiar authority as king make it inconsistent that the Jews should pay to the Roman Empire a stipulated sum for each man under the name of a tax: for we know that Herod, though he was called a king, held nothing more than a borrowed power, and was little better than a slave. On what authority Eusebius states that this registration took place by an order of the Roman Senate, I know not.

7. *Because there was no room for them in the inn* We see here not only the great poverty of Joseph, but the cruel tyranny which admitted of no excuse, but compelled Joseph to bring his wife along with him, at an inconvenient season, when she was near the time of her delivery. Indeed, it is probable that those who were the descendants of the royal family were treated more harshly and disdainfully than the rest. Joseph was not so devoid of feeling as to have no concern about his wife's delivery. He would gladly have avoided this necessity: but, as that is impossible, he is forced to yield,[131] and commends himself to God. We see, at the same time, what sort of beginning the life of the Son of God had, and in what cradle[132] he was placed. Such was his condition at his birth, because he had taken upon him our flesh for this purpose, that he might, "empty himself" (Philippians 2:7) on our account. When he was thrown into a stable, and placed in a manger, and a lodging refused him among men, it was that heaven might be opened to us, not as a temporary lodging,[133] but as our eternal country and inheritance, and that angels might receive us into their abode.

130 "Sub Herode;" — "combien qu'ils fussent sujets d'Herode;" — "though they were subjects of Herod."

131 "Il baisse la teste;" — "he bows the head."

132 "Comment il a este heberge."

133 "Non modo hospitii jure;" — "non point comme un logis pour y estre hebergez en passant."

LUKE 2:8-14

Luke 2:8-14
8. And there were shepherds in the same country abiding in the fields, [134] and watching by night over their flock. [135] **9**. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them: and the glory [136] of the Lord shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. **10**. And the angel said to them, Fear not: for, lo, I announce to you great joy, which shall be to all the people: **11**. For this day is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. **12**. And this shall be a sign to you: [137] you shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-bands [138] laid in a manger: **13**. And suddenly there was present with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, [139] praising God, and saying, **14**. Glory in the highest [140] to God, and on earth peace, among men good-will. [141]

8. *And there were shepherds* It would have been to no purpose that Christ was born in Bethlehem, if it had not been made known to the world. But the method of doing so, which is described by Luke, appears to the view of men very unsuitable. First, Christ is revealed but to a few witnesses, and that too amidst the darkness of night. Again, though God had, at his command, many honorable and distinguished witnesses, he passed by them, and chose shepherds, persons of humble rank, and of no account among men. Here the reason and wisdom of the flesh must prove to be foolishness; and we must acknowledge, that "the foolishness of God" (1 Corinthians 1:25) excels all the wisdom that exists, or appears to exist, in the world. But this too was a part of the "emptying of himself," (Philippians 2:6:) not that any part of Christ's glory should be taken away by it, but that it should lie in concealment for a time. Again, as Paul reminds us, that the gospel is mean according to the flesh, "that our faith should stand" in the power of the Spirit, not in the "lofty[142] words of human wisdom," or in any worldly splendor,[143] (1 Corinthians 2:4,5;) so this inestimable "treasure"

134 "Couchant es champs."

135 "Gardant les veilles de la nuict."

136 "La clarte;" — "the brightness."

137 "Et vous aurez ces enseignes;" — "and you shall have these signs."

138 "Pannis;" — "bandelettes."

139 "Militiae;" — "des armees celestes;" — "of the heavenly armies."

140 "es cieux treshauts;" — "in the highest heavens."

141 "Envers les hommes son bon plaisir, ou, bonne volonte;" — "towards men his good pleasure, or, good-will."

142 "En paroles magnifiques;" — "in magnificent words."

143 "En quelque lustre et apparence du monde;" — "in any luster and display of the world."

has been deposited by God, from the beginning, "in earthen vessels," (2 Corinthians 4:7,) that he might more fully try the obedience of our faith. If then we desire to come to Christ, let us not be ashamed to follow those whom the Lord, in order to cast down the pride of the world, has taken, from among the dung[144] of cattle, to be our instructors.

9. *And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them* He says, that *the glory of the Lord*[145] *shone around* the shepherds, by which they perceived him to be an angel.[146] For it would have been of little avail to be told by an angel what is related by Luke, if God had not testified, by some outward sign, that what they heard proceeded from Him. The angel appeared, not in an ordinary form, or without majesty, but surrounded with the brightness of heavenly glory, to affect powerfully the minds of the shepherds, that they might receive the discourse which was addressed to them, as coming from the mouth of God himself. Hence the *fear,* of which Luke shortly afterwards speaks, by which God usually humbles the hearts of men, (as I have formerly explained,) and disposes them to receive his word with reverence.

10. *Fear not* The design of this exhortation is to alleviate their fear. For, though it is profitable for the minds of men to be struck with awe, that they may learn to "give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name," (Psalm 29:2;) yet they have need, at the same time, of consolation, that they may not be altogether overwhelmed. For the majesty of God could not but swallow up the whole world, if there were not some mildness to mitigate the terror which it brings. And so the reprobate fall down lifeless at the sight of God, because he appears to them in no other character than that of a judge. But to revive the minds of the shepherds, the angel declares that he was sent to them for a different purpose, to *announce to them* the mercy of God. When men hear this single word, that God is reconciled to them, it not only raises up those who are fallen down, but restores those who were ruined, and recalls them from death to life.

The angel opens his discourse by saying, that he *announces great joy;* and next assigns the ground or matter of joy, that *a Savior is born* These words show us, first, that, until men have peace with God, and are reconciled to him through the grace of Christ, all the joy that they experience is deceitful, and of short duration.[147] Ungodly men frequently indulge in frantic and intoxicating mirth; but if there be none to make peace between them and God, the hidden stings of conscience must produce fearful torment. Besides, to whatever extent they may flatter themselves in luxurious indulgence, their own lusts are so many tormentors. The commencement of solid joy is, to perceive the fatherly love of God toward us, which

144 "Ex pecudum stercore;" — "sur la fiente des bestes."

145 "La clarte du Seigneur;" — "the brightness of the Lord."

146 "c'a este afin qu'ils cogneussent que c'estoit l'ange de Dieu qui parloit;" — "it was in order that they might know that it was the angel of the Lord that spoke."

147 "Ce n'est que fumee;" — "it is only smoke."

alone gives tranquillity to our minds. And this "joy," in which, Paul tells us, "the kingdom of God" consists, is "in the Holy Spirit," (Romans 14:17.) By calling it *great joy,* he shows us, not only that we ought, above all things, to rejoice in the salvation brought us by Christ, but that this blessing is so great and boundless, as fully to compensate for all the pains, distresses, and anxieties of the present life. Let us learn to be so delighted with Christ alone, that the perception of his grace may overcome, and at length remove from us, all the distresses of the flesh.[148]

Which shall be to all the people Though the angel addresses the shepherds alone, yet he plainly states, that the message of salvation which he brings is of wider extent, so that not only they, in their private capacity, may hear it, but that others may also hear. Now let it be understood, that this joy was common to all people, because, it was indiscriminately offered to all. For God had promised Christ, not to one person or to another, but to the whole seed of Abraham. If the Jews were deprived, for the most part, of the joy that was offered to them, it arose from their unbelief; just as, at the present day, God invites all indiscriminately to salvation through the Gospel, but the ingratitude of the world is the reason why this grace, which is equally offered to all, is enjoyed by few. Although this joy is confined to a few persons, yet, with respect to God, it is said to be common. When the angel says that this *joy shall be to all the people,* he speaks of the chosen people only; but now that, the middle wall of partition" (Ephesians 2:14) has been thrown down, the same message has reference to the whole human race.[149] For Christ proclaims peace, not only, to them that are nigh, "but to them that are, far off," (Ephesians 2:17,) to "strangers" (Ephesians 2:12) equally with citizens. But as the peculiar covenant with the Jews lasted till the resurrection of Christ, so the angel separates them from the rest of the nations.

11. *This day is born to you* Here, as we lately hinted, the angel expresses the cause of the joy. *This day is born* the Redeemer long ago promised, who was to restore the Church of God to its proper condition. The angel does not speak of it as a thing altogether unknown. He opens his embassy by referring to the Law and the Prophets; for had he been addressing heathens or irreligious persons, it would have been of no use to employ this mode of

148 "Parquoy apprenons de prendre tellement notre contentement en Christ seul, que le sentiment de sa grace nous face surmonter toutes choses qui sont dures a la chair, et finalement en oste toute l'amertume."—"Wherefore, let us learn to take our satisfaction, in such a manner, in Christ alone, that the feeling of his grace may make us rise above all things that are unpleasant to the flesh, and finally may take away all their bitterness."

149 "Au reste, il est bien vray que l'ange parle seulement du peuple esleu, assavoir des Juifs; mais pourceque maintenant la paroy qui faisoit separation est rompue, la mesme ambassade s'addresse aujourdhui a tout le genre humain." — "Besides, it is very true that the angel speaks only of the elect people, namely, the Jews; but because now the wall of partition which made a separation is broken down, the same message is addressed, at the present day, to all the human race."

speaking: *this day is born to you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord* For the same reason, he mentions that he was born *in the city of David,* which could serve no purpose, but to recall the remembrance of those promises which were universally known among the Jews. Lastly, the angel adapted his discourse to hearers who were not altogether unacquainted with the promised redemption. With the doctrine of the Law and the Prophets he joined the Gospel, as emanating from the same source. Now, since the Greek word Greek, as Cicero assures us, has a more extensive meaning than the Latin word *Servator,* and as there is no Latin noun that corresponds to it, I thought it better to employ a barbarous term, than to take anything away from the power of Christ. And I have no doubt, that the author of the Vulgate, and the ancient doctors of the Church, had the same intention.[150] Christ is called Savior,[151] because he bestows a complete salvation. The pronoun *to you*[152] is very emphatic; for it would have given no great delight to hear that the Author of salvation was *born,* unless each person believed that for himself he was born. In the same manner Isaiah says, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given," (Isaiah 9:6;) and Zechariah, "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee lowly," (Zechariah 9:9.)

12. *And this shall be a sign to you*[153] The angel meets the prejudice which might naturally hinder the faith of the shepherds; for what a mockery is it, that he, whom God has sent to be the King, and the only Savior, is seen lying in a manger! That the mean and despicable condition in which Christ was might not deter the shepherds from believing in Christ, the angel tells them beforehand what they would see. This method of proceeding, which might appear, to the view of men, absurd and almost ridiculous, the Lord pursues toward us every day. Sending down to us from heaven the word of the Gospel, he enjoins us to embrace Christ crucified, and holds out to us *signs* in earthly and fading elements, which raise us to

150 He refers to his use of the Latin word *Salvator,* for which there is no classical authority. The apology may be deemed unnecessary; but Calvin was entitled to be more sensitive on this point than many modern scholars. The purity of his style discovers so perfect an acquaintance with the writers of the Augustan age, that it must have given him uneasiness to depart from their authorized terms. He pleads high authority for the liberty he had taken. Cicero, whose command of the resources of his native tongue will not be questioned, acknowledges that there is no Latin word which conveys the full import of the Greek word σωτ⊠ηρ, and in this, as well as many other instances, calls in the aid of a richer and more expressive language than his own. — *Ed.*

151 "*Salvator.*"

152 "Au reste, ce n'est pas sans cause que ce mot *Vous* est adjouste: et il est bien a poiser. Car il ne serviroit gueres de savoir que le Sauveur est nay, sinon qu'un chacun appliquast cela a sa personne, s'asseurant que c'est pour lui qu'est nay le Fils de Dieu." — "Besides, it is not without reason that this word *You* is added; and it is well to weigh it. For it would hardly be of service to know that the Savior is born, unless each applied that to his own person, being persuaded that it is for him that the Savior is born."

153 "Et *vous aurez ces enseignes*;" — "and you shall have these signs."

the glory of a blessed immortality. Having promised to us spiritual righteousness, he places before our eyes a little water: by a small portion of bread and wine, he seals,[154] the eternal life of the soul.[155] But if the stable gave no offense whatever to the shepherds, so as to prevent them from going to Christ to obtain salvation, or from yielding to his authority, while he was yet a child; no sign, however mean in itself, ought to hide his glory from our view, or prevent us from offering to him lowly adoration, now that he has ascended to heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father.

13. *And suddenly there was present with the angel a multitude* An exhibition of divine splendor had been already made in the person of a single angel. But God determined to adorn his own Son in a still more illustrious manner, This was done to confirm our faith as truly as that of the shepherds. Among men, the testimony of "*two or three witnesses*" (Matthew 18:16) is sufficient to remove all doubt. But here is a heavenly host, with one consent and one voice bearing testimony to the Son of God. What then would be our obstinacy, if we refused to join with the choir of angels, in singing the praises of our salvation, which is in Christ? Hence we infer, how abominable in the sight of God must unbelief be, which disturbs this delightful harmony between heaven and earth. Again, we are convicted of more than brutal stupidity, if our faith and our zeal to praise God are not inflamed by the song which the angels, with the view of supplying us with the matter of our praise, sang in full harmony. Still farther, by this example of heavenly melody, the Lord intended to recommend to us the unity of faith, and to exhort us to join with one consent in singing his praises on earth.

14. *Glory to God in the highest* The angels begin with thanksgiving, or with the praises of God; for Scripture, too, everywhere reminds us, that we were redeemed from death for this purpose, that we might testify with the tongue, as well as by the actions of the life, our gratitude to God. Let us remember, then, the final cause, why God reconciled us to himself

154 "Eternam animi vitam obsignat."—Our rendering is close. But what is *sealed?* Is it meant, that the mere act of partaking the Lord's Supper places beyond a doubt the salvation of the worshipper, or even gives to it any additional certainty? In some loose sense of this sort, the phrase is often enough used even by Protestant divines. It is satisfactory to have Calvin's own authority for the meaning of this passage. "*Il seelle la promesse.*" — "He seals the promise." The meaning is, that God ratifies his word. By condescending to employ outward symbols, together with his holy word, for expressing the blessings of salvation he holds out to his people an additional testimony, and in this manner grants a strong confirmation to their faith. — *Ed.*

155 It may be proper to exhibit the entire sentence referred to in the former note. "Comme nous ayant promis la justice spirituelle, il nous met devant les yeux un peu d'eau: par un petit morceau de pain et une goutte de vin, il seelle la promesse qu'il a faite de la vie eternelle de nos ames." — "As, having promised to us spiritual righteousness, he places before our eyes a little water: by a small morsel of bread and a drop of wine, he seals the promise which he has made of the eternal life of our souls."

through his Only Begotten Son. It was that he might glorify his name, by revealing the riches of his grace, and of his boundless mercy. And even now to whatever extent any one is excited by his knowledge of grace to celebrate the glory of God, such is the extent of proficiency in the faith of Christ. Whenever our salvation is mentioned, we should understand that a signal has been given, [156] to excite us to thanksgiving and to the praises of God.

On earth peace The most general reading is, that the words, *among men good-will,* should stand as a third clause. So far as relates to the leading idea of the passage, it is of little moment which way you read it; but the other appears to be preferable. The two clauses, *Glory to God in the highest,* and *peace on earth,* do unquestionably agree with each other; but if you do not place *men* and *God* in marked opposition, the contrast will not fully appear.[157] Perhaps commentators have mistaken the meaning of the preposition ἐν, for it was an obscure meaning of the words to say, that there is *peace in men;* but as that word is redundant in many passages of Scripture, it need not detain us here. However, if any one prefer to throw it to the last clause, the meaning will be the same, as I shall presently show.

We must now see what the angels mean by the word *peace.* They certainly do not speak of an outward peace cultivated by men with each other; but they say, that the earth is at peace, when men have been reconciled to God, and enjoy an inward tranquillity in their own minds.[158] We know that we are born "children of wrath," (Ephesians 2:3,) and are by nature enemies to God; and must be distressed by fearful apprehensions, so long as we feel that God is angry with us. A short and clear definition of *peace* may be obtained from two opposite things, — the wrath of God and the dread of death. It has thus a twofold reference; one to God, and another to men. We obtain peace with God, when he begins to be gracious to us, by taking away our guilt, and "not imputing to us our trespasses," (2 Corinthians 5:19;) and when we, relying on his fatherly love, address him with full confidence, and boldly praise him for the salvation which he has promised to us. Now though, in another passage, the life of man on earth is declared to be a continual warfare,[159] (Job 7:1,) and the state of the fact shows that nothing is more full of trouble than our condition, so long as we remain in the world, yet the angels expressly say that there is *peace on earth* This is intended to inform us that, so long as we trust to the grace of Christ, no troubles that can arise will prevent us from enjoying composure and serenity of mind. Let us then remember, that faith is seated

156 "Comme si la trompette sonnoit, pour nous resveiller;" — "as if the trumpet were sounding to awake us."

157 "Or si on ne mettoit les hommes au second membre, l'antithese ne seroit pas parfaite." — "But if men were not put in the second clause, the contrast would not be perfect."

158 "Quand les hommes estans reconciliez a Dieu, ont repos en leurs esprits, et en leurs consciences." — "When men being reconciled to God, have rest in their minds and in their consciences."

159 [illegible],—"i*s there not a warfare to man upon earth?*"

amidst the storms of temptations, amidst various dangers, amidst violent attacks, amidst contests and fears, that our faith may not fail or be shaken by any kind of opposition.

Among men good-will[160] The Vulgate has *good-will* in the genitive case: *to men of good-will.*[161] How that reading crept in, I know not: but it ought certainly to be rejected, both because it is not genuine,[162] and because it entirely corruptsthe meaning. Others read *good-will* in the nominative case, and still mistake its meaning. They refer *good-will* to men, as if it were an exhortation to embrace the grace of God. I acknowledge that the peace which the Lord offers to us takes effect only when we receive it. But as εὐδοκία is constantly used in Scripture in the sense of the Hebrew word ⊠⊠⊠, the old translator rendered it *beneplacitum,* or, *good-will.* This passage is not correctly understood as referring to the acceptance of grace. The angels rather speak of it as the source of peace, and thus inform us that peace is a free gift, and flows from the pure mercy of God. If it is thought better to read *good-will to men,* or *towards men,* [163] it will not be inadmissible, so far as regards the meaning: for in this way it will show the cause of *peace* to be, that God has been pleased to bestow his undeserved favor on men, with whom he formerly was at deadly variance. If you read, *the peace of good-will* as meaning voluntary peace, neither will I object to that interpretation. But the simpler way is to look upon εὐφοκία as added, in order to inform us of the source from which our peace is derived.[164]

160 "Envers les hommes son bon plaisir, ou, bonne volonte;" — "towards men his good pleasure, or, good-will."

161 "Hominibus bonae voluntatis."

162 "Adulterina." — "Pource que ce n'est pas la vraye et naturelle." —"Because it is not the true and natural reading."

163 "In hominibus;" — "Aux hommes, ou, Envers les hommes."

164 In the *Opuscula Theologica* of the elder Tittmann, the critical scholar will find this beautiful passage discussed with that happy union of learning, discrimination, and piety, which distinguishes all his writings. — *Ed.*

LUKE 2:15-21

Luke 2:15-21
15. And it happened, after that the angels departed from them into heaven, that the shepherds then talked among themselves, Let us pass even to Bethlehem, and let us see what has happened, which the Lord hath revealed to us. **16**. And they came hastening, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe laid in the manger. **17**. And when they had seen it, they published concerning the word which had been told them about this child. **18**. And all who heard wondered about those things which had been told them by the shepherds. **19**. Now Mary kept all these words, laying them up in her heart. [165] **20**. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things which they had heard and seen, as it had been told to them. **21**. And after that eight days were fulfilled, that the child might be circumcised, his name was called JESUS: which had been called by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

15. *After that the angels departed* Here is described to us the obedience of the shepherds. The Lord had made them the witnesses of his Son to the whole world. What he had spoken to them by his angels was efficacious, and was not suffered to pass away. They were not plainly and expressly commanded to come to Bethlehem; but, being sufficiently aware that such was the design of God, they hasten to see Christ. In the same manner, we know that Christ is held out to us, in order that our hearts may approach him by faith; and our delay in coming admits of no excuse.[166] But again, Luke informs us, that the shepherds resolved to set out, immediately after the angels had departed. This conveys an important lesson. Instead of allowing the word of God, as many do, to pass away with the sound, we must take care that it strike its roots deep in us, and manifest its power, as soon as the sound has died away upon our ears. It deserves our attention, also, that the shepherds exhort one another: for it is not enough that each of us is attentive to his own duty, if we do not give mutual exhortations. Their obedience is still farther commended by the statement of Luke, that they *hastened,* (ver. 16;) for we are required to show the readiness of faith.

Which the Lord hath revealed to us They had only heard it from the angel; but they intentionally and correctly say, that *the Lord had revealed* it to them; for they consider the messenger of God to possess the same authority as if the Lord himself had addressed them. For this reason, the Lord directs our attention to himself; that we may not fix our view on men, and undervalue the authority of his Word. We see also that they reckon themselves

165 "Les ruminant en son coeur;" — "ruminating on them in her heart."

166 "Si nous sommes paresseux de le faire, toutes les excuses du monde ne nous serviront de rien." — "If we are indolent in doing so, all the apologies in the world will be of no service to us."

under obligation, not to neglect the treasure which the Lord had pointed out to them; for they conclude that, immediately after receiving this intelligence, they must go to Bethlehem to see it. In the same manner, every one of us, according to the measure of his faith and understanding, ought to be prepared to follow wheresoever God calls.

16. *And found Mary* This was a revolting sight, and was sufficient of itself to produce an aversion to Christ. For what could be more improbable than to believe that he was the King of the whole people, who was deemed unworthy to be ranked with the lowest of the multitude? or to expect the restoration of the kingdom and salvation from him, whose poverty and want were such, that he was thrown into a stable? Yet Luke writes, that none of these things prevented the shepherds from admiring and praising God. The glory of God was so fully before their eyes, and reverence for his Word was so deeply impressed upon their minds, that the elevation of their faith easily rose above all that appeared mean or despicable in Christ.[167] And the only reason why our faith is either retarded or driven from the proper course, by some very trifling obstacles, is, that we do not look steadfastly enough on God, and are easily "tossed to and fro," (Ephesians 4:14.) If this one thought were entirely to occupy our minds, that we have a certain and faithful testimony from heaven, it would be a sufficiently strong and firm support against every kind of temptations, and will sufficiently protect us against every little offense that might have been taken.

17. *They published concerning the word* It is mentioned by Luke, in commendation of the faith of the shepherds, that they honestly delivered to others what they had received from the Lord; and it was advantageous to all of us that they should attest this, and should be a sort of secondary angels in confirming our faith. Luke shows also that, in publishing what they had heard, they were not without success.[168] Nor can it be doubted, that the Lord gave efficacy to what they said, that it might not be ridiculed or despised; for the low rank of the men diminished their credit, and the occurrence itself might be regarded as fabulous. But the Lord, who gave them this employment, does not allow it to be fruitless.

That the Lord should adopt such a method of proceeding as this, — should employ inconsiderable men in publishing his Word, may not be quite so agreeable to the human mind. But it tends to humble the pride of the flesh, and to try the obedience of faith; and therefore God approves of it. Still, though all are astonished, no one moves a step to come to Christ: from which we may infer, that the impression made upon them by hearing of the power of God, was unaccompanied by any devout affection of the heart. The design of publishing this report was not so much for their salvation, as to render the ignorance of the whole people inexcusable.

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167 In the French copy he adds: "En sorte que cela ne les empesche point de recognoistre la hautesse de sa maiste divine." — "So that it does not hinder them from acknowledging the height of his divine majesty."

168 "Ils n'ont pas perdu leurs peines;" — "they did not lose their pains."

19. *Now Mary kept* Mary's diligence in contemplating the works of God is laid before us for two reasons; first, to inform us, that this treasure was laid up in her heart, for the purpose of being published to others at the proper time; and, secondly, to afford to all the godly an example for imitation. For, if we are wise, it will be the chief employment, and the great object of our life, to consider with attention those works of God which build up our faith. *Mary kept all these things* This relates to her memory. Συμβάλλειν signifies *to throw together*, — to collect the several events which agreed in proving the glory of Christ, so that they might form one body. For Mary could not wisely estimate the collective value of all those occurrences, except by comparing them with each other.

20. *Glorifying and praising God* This is another circumstance which is fitted to be generally useful in confirming our faith. The shepherds knew with certainty that this was a work of God. Their zeal in *glorifying and praising God* is an implied reproof of our indolence, or rather of our ingratitude. If the cradle of Christ[169] had such an effect upon them, as to make them rise from the stable and the manger to heaven, how much more powerful ought the death and resurrection of Christ to be in raising us to God? For Christ did not only ascend from the earth, that he might draw all things after him; but he sits at the right hand of the Father, that, during our pilgrimage in the world, we may meditate with our whole heart on the heavenly life. When Luke says, that the testimony of the angel served as a rule to the shepherds in all that they did,[170] he points out the nature of true godliness. For our faith is properly aided by the works of God, when it directs everything to this end, that the truth of God, which was revealed in his word, may be brought out with greater clearness.

21. *That the child might be circumcised* As to circumcision in general, the reader may consult the Book of Genesis, (17:10.) At present, it will be sufficient to state briefly what applies to the person of Christ. God appointed that his Son should be circumcised, in order to subject him to the law; for circumcision was a solemn rite, by which the Jews

were initiated into the observance of the law.[171] Paul explains the design,[172] when he says, that Christ was

> "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law,"
> (Galatians 4:4,5.)

169 "Si les petits drapeaux esquels estoit enveloppe l'infant Jesus;"— "if the little rags in which the child Jesus was wrapped."

170 "Ad quam omnia exigerent." — "Une reigle, a laquelle ils ont rapporte tout ce qu'ils voyoyent;" — "a rule by which they related all that they saw."

171 "Par lequel les Juifs protestoyent de se soumettre a l'observation de la Loy;" — "by which the Jews solemnly declared that they would submit to the observance of the Law."

172 "Finem." — "La fin ou le but de ceste soumission de Jesus Christ;" —"the end or design of this submission of Jesus Christ."

By undergoing circumcision, Christ acknowledged himself to be the slave[173] of the law, that he might procure our freedom. And in this way not only was the bondage[174] of the law abolished by him, but the shadow of the ceremony was applied to his own body, that it might shortly afterwards come to an end. For though the abrogation of it depends on the death and resurrection of Christ, yet it was a sort of prelude to it, that the Son of God submitted to be circumcised.

His name was called JESUS. This passage shows, that it was a general custom among the Jews to give names to their children on the day that they were circumcised, just as we now do at baptism. Two things are here mentioned by the Evangelist. First, the name *Jesus* was not given to the Son of God accidentally, or by the will of men, but was the name which the angel had brought from heaven. Secondly, Joseph and Mary obeyed the command of God. The agreement between our faith and the word of God lies in this, that he speaks first, and we follow, so that our faith answers to his promises. Above all, the order of preaching the word is held up by Luke for our commendation. Salvation through the grace of Christ, he tells us, had been promised by God through the angel, and was proclaimed by the voice of men.

173 "Servum."—This might have been supposed to be equivalent to *ministrum, servant,* had not the latter clause of the sentence expressly contrasted *freedom* with the condition of a *slave.* But Calvin settles the point by rendering it *serf, slave;* by which he evidently means "complete and degrading subjection." Paul frequently speaks of the state of the Church under the law as *bondage,* (Galatians 4:3,9,) and a *yoke of bondage,* (Galatians 5:1.) — *Ed.*

174 See passages referred to in the preceding note, in which the term *bondage is* applied by an inspired writer to the ceremonial law — *Ed.*

MATTHEW 2:1-6

Matthew 2:1-6

1. Now when Jesus had been born in Bethlehem of Judea, [175] in the times of Herod the King, lo, Magi from the East came to Jerusalem, **2**. Saying, Where is he who is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and have come that we may worship him. **3**. And having heard these things, Herod the King was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. **4**. And having assembled all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired at them where Christ should be born. **5**. But they said to him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it has been written by the prophet: **6**. And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art by no means the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come the leader, [176] who shall feed my people Israel.

1. *Now when Jesus had been born* How it came about that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Matthew does not say. The Spirit of God, who had appointed the Evangelists to be his clerks,[177] appears purposely to have regulated their style in such a manner, that they all wrote one and the same history, with the most perfect agreement, but in different ways. It was intended, that the truth of God should more clearly and strikingly appear, when it was manifest that his witnesses did not speak by a preconcerted plan, but that each of them separately, without paying any attention to another, wrote freely and honestly what the Holy Spirit dictated.

This is a very remarkable narrative. God brought *Magi* from Chaldea, to come to the land of Judea, for the purpose of adoring Christ, in the stable where he lay, amidst the tokens, not of honor, but of contempt. It was a truly wonderful purpose of God, that he caused the entrance of his Son into the world to be attended by deep meanness, and yet bestowed upon

175 "(Cite) de Judee;" — "(city) of Judea."

176 "Dux;" — "Conducteur."

177 "Scribas;" — "*greffiers.*"—*Clerks,* not *Authors* in the ordinary meaning of that term, but persons who wrote to the dictation of another. This conveys the idea of what is frequently called *plenary inspiration.* If such a term as *Clerk,* or *Penman,* may be supposed to lower the sacred writers, it is not by a comparison of them with uninspired historians, the ablest of whom cannot, without arrogance, aspire to an equal level with those who wrote by inspiration. But when man is brought into a comparison with God, no language can express too strongly the infinite distance between the parties. The Evangelists do not ask the praise of invention, or judgment, or of anything else which would imply that the work was their own production. But they lay claim to a loftier and peculiar distinction, that they faithfully committed to writing that history which they were honored to receive from its Divine Author. *Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,* (2 Peter 1:21.) — *Ed.*

him illustrious ornaments, both of commendation and of other outward signs, that our faith might be supplied with everything necessary to prove his Divine Majesty.

A beautiful instance of real harmony, amidst apparent contradiction, is here exhibited. A star from heaven announces that he is a king, to whom a manger, intended for cattle, serves for a throne, because he is refused admittance among the lowest of the people. His majesty shines in the East, while in Judea it is so far from being acknowledged, that it is visited by many marks of dishonor. Why is this? The heavenly Father chose to appoint the star and the Magi as our guides, to lead directly to his Son: while he stripped him of all earthly splendor, for the purpose of informing us that his kingdom is spiritual. This history conveys profitable instruction, not only because God brought the *Magi* to his Son, as the first-fruits of the Gentiles, but also because he appointed the kingdom of his Son to receive their commendation, and that of the star, for the confirmation of our faith; that the wicked and malignant contempt of his nation might not render him less estimable in our eyes.

Magi is well known to be the name given by the Persians and Chaldees to astrologers and philosophers: and hence it may readily be conjectured that those men came from Persia.[178] As the Evangelist does not state what was their number, it is better to be ignorant of it, than to affirm as certain what is doubtful. Papists have been led into a childish error, of supposing that they were *three* in number: because Matthew says, that they brought *gold, frankincense, and myrrh,* (verse 11.) But the historian does not say, that each of them separately presented his own gift. He rather says, that those three gifts were presented by them in common. That ancient author, whoever he may be, whose imperfect Commentary on Matthew bears the name of Chrysostom, and is reckoned among Chrysostom's works, says that they were fourteen. This carries as little probability as the other. It may have come from a tradition of the Fathers, but has no solid foundation. But the most ridiculous contrivance of the Papists on this subject is, that those men were kings, because they found in another passage a prediction, that

> the kings of Tarshish, and of the Isles, and of Sheba,
> would offer gifts to the Lord, (Psalm 72:10.)

Ingenious workmen, truly, who, in order to present those men in a new shape, have begun with turning the world from one side to another: for they have changed the south

178 "Le mot Grec, (μάγαι,) du quel use l'Evangeliste est celuy d'ou vient le mot de Magiciens: mais les Perses et Chaldeens nomment ainsi leurs Astrologues et Philosophes: et pourtant nous l'avons traduit par ce mot de Sages. Parquoy il y a grande apparence de dire qu'ils etoyent venus du pays des Perses." — "The Greek word, (μάγοι,) which the Evangelist employs, is that from which the word *Magicians* is derived: but the Persians and Chaldees give this name also to their Astrologers and Philosophers: and therefore we have translated it by the word *Sages,* or *Wise men.* Wherefore there is great probability in saying that they had come from the country of the Persians."

and west into *the east!* Beyond all doubt, they have been stupified by a righteous judgment of God, that all might laugh at the gross ignorance of those who have not scrupled to adulterate "and, change the truth of God into a lie," (Romans 1:25.)

The first inquiry here is: Was this *star* one of those which the Lord created *in the beginning* (Genesis 1:1,16) to "garnish the heavens?" (Job 26:13.) *Secondly,* Were the *magi* led by their acquaintance with astrology to conclude that it pointed out the birth of Christ? On these points, there is no necessity for angry disputation: but it may be inferred from the words of Matthew, that it was not a natural, but an extraordinary star. It was not agreeable to the order of nature, that it should disappear for a certain period, and afterwards should suddenly become bright; nor that it should pursue a straight course towards Bethlehem, and at length remain stationary above the house where Christ was. Not one of these things belongs to natural stars. It is more probable that it resembled[179] a comet, and was seen, not in the heaven, but in the air. Yet there is no impropriety in Matthew, who uses popular language, calling it incorrectly a *star.*

This almost decides likewise the second question: for since astrology is undoubtedly confined within the limits of nature, its guidance alone could not have conducted the *Magi* to Christ; so that they must have been aided by a secret revelation of the Spirit. I do not go so far as to say, that they derived no assistance whatever from the art: but I affirm, that this would have been of no practical advantage, if they had not been aided by a new and extraordinary revelation.

2. *Where is he who has been born King?* The notion of some commentators, that he is said to have been *born King,* by indirect contrast with one who has been *made* or *created* a king, appears to me too trifling. I rather suppose the *Magi* to have simply meant, that this king had been recently born, and was still a child, by way of distinguishing him from a king who is of age, and who holds the reins of government: for they immediately add, that they had been drawn, not by the fame of his exploits, or by any present exhibitions of his greatness, but by a heavenly presage of his future reign. But if the sight of a star had so powerful an

179 Calvin says, not that it *was* a comet, but that it *resembled a* comet; and it is probable enough that the *meteor* assumed that aspect. He refutes, in a masterly and conclusive manner, the supposition that it was "natural star," but, with modesty and good sense, avoids shocking the prejudices of his age. Of astrology he speaks more doubtfully. If he had lent the countenance of his name to that pretended science, we ought not to have blamed him severely. Long after he had left the world, men of powerful minds, and of extensive attainments in science, found it no easy matter to disentangle themselves from its meshes, and to proclaim their freedom. But Calvin needs no vindication. He has left us a treatise, *Adversus Astrologiam Judiciarium*, "Against Judicial Astrology;" which Servetus, as much his inferior in philosophical views in sterling worth, brings forward as one of his charges. *Damnatam a me fuisse Astrologiam conqueritur*, says Calvin; "It is made a ground of complaint against me that I have condemned astrology." — *Ed.*

effect on the *Magi,* woe to our insensibility, who, now that Christ the King has been revealed to us, are so cold in our inquiries after him!

And have come that we may worship him The reason why the *star* had been exhibited was, to draw the *Magi* into Judea, that they might be witnesses and heralds of the new King.[180] So far as respects themselves, they had not come to render to Christ such pious worship, as is due to the Son of God, but intended to salute him, according to the Persian custom,[181] as a very eminent King. For their views, with regard to him, probably went no farther, than that his power and exalted rank would be so extraordinary as to impress all nations with just admiration and reverence. It is even possible, that they wished to gain his favor beforehand, that he might treat them favorably and kindly, if he should afterwards happen to possess dominion in the east.

3. *Herod the king was troubled* Herod was not unacquainted with the predictions, which promised to the Jews a King, who would restore their distressful and ruinous affairs to a prosperous condition. He had lived from a child among that nation, and was thoroughly acquainted with their affairs. Besides, the report was spread everywhere, and could not be unknown to the neighboring nations. Yet he is *troubled,* as if the matter had been new and unheard of; because he put no trust in God, and thought it idle to rely on the promises of a Redeemer; and particularly because, with the foolish confidence incident to proud men, he imagined that the kingdom was secure to himself and his descendants. But though, in the intoxication of prosperity, he was formerly accustomed to view the prophecies with scorn, the recollection of them now aroused him to sudden alarm. For he would not have been so strongly moved by the simple tale of the *Magi,* if he had not remembered the predictions, which he had formerly looked upon as harmless,[182] and of no importance. Thus, when the Lord has permitted unbelievers to sleep, he suddenly breaks their rest.[183]

And all Jerusalem with him This may be explained in two ways. Either the people were roused, in a tumultuous manner, by the novelty of the occurrence, though the glad tidings of a king who had been born to them were cordially welcomed. Or the people, accustomed to distresses, and rendered callous by long endurance, dreaded a change which might introduce still greater calamities. For they were so completely worn down, and almost wasted, by continued wars, that their wretched and cruel bondage appeared to them not only tolerable, but desirable, provided it were accompanied by peace. This shows how little they had

180 "Que la ils fussent comme herauts pour porter les nouvelles du nouveau Roy." — "That there they might be as heralds, to carry the tidings of the new King."

181 "Persico more;" — "selon la coustume de leur pays;" — "according to the custom of their country."

182 "Lusoria;" alluding to the phrase used by Seneca and others, *lusoria fulmina,* "harmless thunderbolts."

183 "Il les resveille tout soudain, et leur fait bien sentir leur folie." — "He awakes them all on a sudden, and makes them deeply feel their folly."

profited under God's chastisements: for they were so benumbed and stupified, that the promised redemption and salvation almost stank[184] in their nostrils. Matthew intended, I have no doubt, to express their ingratitude, in being so entirely broken by the long continuance of their afflictions, as to throw away the hope and desire of the grace which had been promised to them.

4. *Having assembled the priests* Though deep silence prevailed respecting Christ in the Hall of Herod, yet, as soon as the *Magi* have thrown out the mention of a *King,* predictions are remembered, which formerly lay in oblivion. Herod instantly conjectures, that the *King,* about whom the *Magi* inquire, is the *Messiah* whom God had formerly promised, (Daniel 9:25.) Here again it appears, that Herod is seriously alarmed, when he puts such earnest inquiries; and no wonder. All tyrants are cowards, and their cruelty produces stronger alarm in their own breasts than in the breasts of others. Herod must have trembled more than others, because he perceived that he was reigning in opposition to God.

This new investigation shows, that the contempt of Christ, before the arrival of the *Magi,* must have been very deep. At a later period, the scribes and high priests labored with fury to corrupt the whole of the Scripture, that they might not give any countenance to Christ. But on the present occasion they reply honestly out of the Scripture, and for this reason, that Christ and his Gospel have not yet given them uneasiness. And so all ungodly persons find no difficulty in giving their assent to God on general principles; but when the truth of God begins to press them more closely, they throw out the venom of their rebellion.

We have a striking instance of this, in our own day, among the Papists. They freely own, that he is the only-begotten Son of God, clothed with our flesh, and acknowledge the one person of God-man, as subsisting in the two natures. But when we come to the power and office of Christ, a contest immediately breaks out; because they will not consent to take a lower rank, and much less to be reduced to nothing. In a word, so long as wicked men think that it is taking nothing from themselves, they will yield to God and to Scripture some degree of reverence. But when Christ comes into close conflict with ambition, covetousness, pride, misplaced confidence, hypocrisy, and deceit, they immediately forget all modesty, and break out into rage. Let us therefore learn, that the chief cause of blindness in the enemies of truth is to be found in their wicked affections, which change light into darkness.

6. *And thou, Bethlehem* The scribes quoted faithfully, no doubt, the words of the passage in their own language, as it is found in the prophet. But Matthew reckoned it enough to point out the passage; and, as he wrote in Greek, he followed the ordinary reading. This passage, and others of the same kind, readily suggest the inference, that Matthew did not compose his Gospel in the Hebrew language. It ought always to be observed that, whenever any proof from Scripture is quoted by the apostles, though they do not translate word for

184 "Quodammodo foeteret,"

word, and sometimes depart widely from the language, yet it is applied correctly and appropriately to their subject. Let the reader always consider the purpose for which passages of Scripture are brought forward by the Evangelists, so as not to stick too closely to the particular words, but to be satisfied with this, that the Evangelists never torture Scripture into a different meaning, but apply it correctly in its native meaning. But while it was their intention to supply with milk children and "novices" (1 Timothy 3:6) in faith, who were not yet able to endure "strong meat," (Hebrews 5:12,) there is nothing to prevent the children of God from making careful and diligent inquiry into the meaning of Scripture, and thus being led to the fountain by the taste which the apostles afford.

Let us now return to the prediction. Thus it stands literally in the Prophet:

"And thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little
among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall
he come forth to me, who is Ruler in Israel," (Micah 5:2.)

For *Ephratah* Matthew has put *Judah,* but the meaning is the same; for Micah only intended, by this mark, to distinguish the Bethlehem of which he speaks, from another Bethlehem, which was in the tribe of Zebulun. There is greater difficulty in what follows: for the Prophet says, that Bethlehem is *little,* when reckoned among the governments of Judah, while Matthew, on the contrary: speaks highly of its rank as one of the most distinguished: *thou art by no means the least among the princes of Judah* This reason has induced some commentators to read the passage in the prophet as a question, *Art thou little among the thousands of Judah?* But I rather agree with those who think that Matthew intended, by this change of the language, to magnify the grace of God in making an inconsiderable and unknown town the birth-place of the highest King. Although Bethlehem received this distinguished honor, it was of no advantage to its inhabitants, but brought upon them a heavier destruction: for there an unworthy reception was given to the Redeemer. For he is *to be Ruler,* Matthew has put *he shall feed,* (ποιμανεῖ) But he has expressed both, when he says, that Christ is the *leader, (*ἡγούμενος,*)* and that to him is committed the office of *feeding* his people.

MATTHEW 2:7-12

Matthew 2:7-12

7. Then Herod, having secretly called the Magii inquired at them carefully at what time the star had appeared **8**. And having ordered them to go to Bethlehem, he said, Go, inquire concerning the young child; and, when ye have found him, bring me back information, that I also may come and worship him. **9**. But they, having heard the King, departed; and, lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till, having advanced, it stood above the place in which the child was. **10**. And, when they had seen the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. **11**. And, entering the house, they found the young child with Mary his mother, and, falling down, they worshipped him: and, having opened their treasures, they presented to him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. **12**. And, warned by a heavenly intimation through a dream, that they should not return to Herod, they departed, by another way, into their own country.

7. *Then Herod, having secretly called the Magi* The tyrant did not dare to avow his fear and uneasiness, lest he might give fresh courage to a people, by whom he knew that he was hated. In public, therefore, he pretends that this matter does not concern him, but *inquires secretly,* in order to meet immediate danger. Though a bad conscience made him timid, there can be no doubt that God struck his mind with an unusual fear, which for a time made him incapable of reflection, and almost deprived him of the use of reason. For nothing was more easy than to send one of his courtiers as an escort, under the pretense of courtesy, who would investigate the whole matter, and immediately return. Herod certainly was a man of no ordinary address, and of great courage. It is the more surprising that, in a case of extremity, and when the remedy is at hand, he remains in a state of amazement, and almost dead. Let us learn, that a miracle was effected, in rescuing the Son of God from the jaws of the lion. Not less at the present day does God infatuate his enemies, so that a thousand schemes of injuring and ruining his Church do not occur to their minds, and even the opportunities which are at hand are not embraced. The trick which Herod practiced on the *Magi,* by pretending that he also would come for the purpose of worshipping Christ, was avoided by the Lord, as we shall see, in another way. But as Herod's dread of arousing the people against him deprived him of the use of his reason, so again he is driven by such madness, that he does not hesitate or shudder at the thought of provoking God. For he knew that, if a King were born, it was ordained by God, that he should raise up the throne "of David, which was fallen," (Amos 9:11.) He does not therefore attack men, but furiously dares to fight with God. Two things claim our attention. He was seized with a spirit of giddiness, to attack God;

and, on the other hand, his manner of acting was childish: for his design was frustrated, so that he was like a "blind man groping in darkness."[185]

9. *But they, having heard the King, departed* It is truly an instance of base sluggishness, that not one of the Jews offers himself as an escort to those foreigners, to go and see the King who had been promised to their own nation. The scribes show them the way, and point out the place where he was born; but they allow them to depart alone: not one moves a step. They were afraid, perhaps, of Herod's cruelty: but it displayed wicked ingratitude that, for the sake of the salvation which had been offered to them, they were unwilling to undergo any risk, and cared less about the grace of God than about the frown of a tyrant. The whole nation, I have lately showed, was so degenerate, that they chose rather to be oppressed with the yoke of tyranny, than to submit to any inconvenience arising from a change. If God had not fortified the minds of the Magi by his Spirit, they might have been discouraged by this state of things. But the ardor of their zeal is unabated; they set out without a guide. And yet the means of confirming their faith are not wanting; for they hear that the King, who had been pointed out to them by a star, was long ago described, in glowing language, by divine predictions. It would seem that the star, which hitherto guided them in the way, had lately disappeared. The reason may easily be *conjectured.* It was, that they might make inquiry in Jerusalem about the new King, and might thus take away all excuse from the Jews, who, after having been instructed about the Redeemer who was sent to them, knowingly and willingly despise him.

11. *They found the young child* So revolting a sight might naturally have created an additional prejudice; for Christ was so far from having aught of royalty surrounding him, that he was in a meaner and more despised condition than any peasant child. But they are convinced that he is divinely appointed to be a King. This thought alone, deeply rooted in their minds, procures their reverence. They contemplate in the purpose of God his exalted rank,

185 Like many others of his scriptural allusions, this is not marked by our Author. It approaches very nearly to the language of one of the curses pronounced by Moses on the people of Israel, "If they should not hearken unto the voice of the Lord their God;" — "thou shalt grope at noon-day as *the blind gropeth in darkness,"* (Deuteronomy 28:15,29.) But it is more likely that he had in his eye a passage from the book of Job. In the opening description of "the devices of the crafty," *Herod,* who is pronounced by Calvin to have been "a man of no ordinary address, and another *Herod,* whom our Lord designates *that fox,* (Luke 13:32,) are so exactly delineated, that it might almost be imagined they had sat for the picture. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness; and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong. *They meet with darkness in the day-time, and grope in the noon-day as in the night,"* (Job 5:12-14.) — *Ed.*

which is still concealed from outward view.[186] Holding it for certain, that he will one day be different from what he now appears, they are not at all ashamed to render to him the honors of royalty.

Their presents show whence they came: for there can be no doubt that they brought them as the choicest productions of their country. We are not to understand, that each of them presented his own offering, but that the three offerings, which are mentioned by Matthew, were presented by all of them in common. Almost all the commentators indulge in speculations about those gifts, as denoting the kingdom, priesthood, and burial of Christ. They make *gold* the symbol of his *kingdom, — frankincense,* of his *priesthoods*, — and *myrrh,* of his *burial*. I see no solid ground for such an opinion. It was customary, we know, among the Persians, when they offered homage to their kings, to bring a present in their hands. The Magi select those three for the produce of which Eastern countries are celebrated; just as Jacob sent into Egypt the choicest and most esteemed productions of the soil.

"Take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds,"

(Genesis 43:11.)

Again, in rendering homage, according to the custom of Persia, to him whom they still regarded as an earthly King, they offered the productions of the soil. Our duty is, to adore him in a spiritual manner: for the lawful and reasonable worship which he demands is, that we consecrate first ourselves, and then all that we have, to his service.

186 "Car ils considerent et contemplent au conseil de Dieu sa dignite et magnificence royale, laquelle n'apparoissoit point encores;" — "for they consider and contemplate in the purpose of God his royal dignity and splendor, which did not yet appear,"

LUKE 2:22-32

Luke 2:22-32
22. And after that the days of their [187] purification were fulfilled according to the law of Moses, they brought him to Jerusalem, that they might present him to the Lord, **23**. As it is written in the Law of the Lord, Every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord: **24**. And that they might offer a sacrifice, according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons. **25**. And, lo, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and that man was just and devout, [188] waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. **26**. And he had received a revelation [189] from the Holy Spirit, that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Christ. **27**. And he came by the Spirit into the temple. [190] And when the parents brought the young child Jesus, that they might do according to the custom of the Law for him, **28**. He also took him into his arms: and blessed God, and said, **29**. Thou now sendest thy servant away, O Lord, according to thy word, in peace, **30**. For my eyes have seen thy salvation, **31**. Which thou hast prepared before the face of all nations: **32**. A light for the enlightening of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

22. *And after that the days were fulfilled* On the fortieth day after the birth, (Leviticus 12:2,4,) the rite of purification was necessary to be performed. But Mary and Joseph come to Jerusalem for another reason, to present Christ to the Lord, because he was the first-born. Let us now speak first of the purification. Luke makes it apply both to Mary and to Christ: for the pronoun αὐτῶν, of *them,* can have no reference whatever to Joseph. But it ought not to appear strange, that Christ, who was to be, made a curse for us on the cross," (Galatians 3:13,) should, for our benefit, take upon him our uncleanness with respect to legal guilt, though he was "without blemish and without spot," (1 Peter 1:19.) It ought not, I say, to appear strange, if the fountain of purity, in order to wash away our stains, chose to be reckoned unclean.[191] It is a mistake to imagine that this law of purification was merely

187 "Les jours de la purification d'iceux, *ou, d'icelle, assavoir de Marie,"*(Leviticus 12:6.)—"The days of the purification of them, *or, of her, namely of Mary,"* (Leviticus 12:6.)

188 "Craignant Dieu;" — "fearing God."

189 "Lequel avoit este adverti divinement par le Sainct Esprit;" — "who had been divinely warned by the Holy Spirit"

190 "Icelui estant meu par le Sainct Esprit, vint au Temple." — "He, being moved by the Holy Ghost, came to the Temple."

191 "Si celuy qui est la fontaine de toute purete, a voulu estre tenu pour immonde et souille, afin de laver toutes nos ordures." — "If he, who is the fountain of all purity, determined to be reckoned unclean and defiled in order to wash away our pollutions."

political, and that the woman was unclean in presence of her husband, not in presence of God. On the contrary, it placed before the eyes of the Jews both the corruption of their nature, and the remedy of divine grace.

This law is of itself abundantly sufficient to prove original sin, while it contains a striking proof of the grace of God; for there could not be a clearer demonstration of the curse pronounced on mankind than when the Lord declared, that the child comes from its mother unclean and polluted, and that the mother herself is consequently defiled by childbearing. Certainly, if man were not born a sinner, if he were not by nature a *child of wrath,* (Ephesians 2:3,) if some taint of sin did not dwell in him, he would have no need of purification. Hence it follows, that all are corrupted in Adam; for the mouth of the Lord charges all with pollution.

It is in perfect consistency with this, that the Jews are spoken of, in other passages, as "holy branches of a holy root," (Romans 11:16:) for this benefit did not properly belong to their own persons. They had been set apart, by the privilege of adoption, as an elect people; but the corruption, which they had by inheritance from Adam, was first in the order of time[192] We must, therefore, distinguish between the first nature, and that special kindness through a covenant, by which God delivers his own people from the curse which had been pronounced on all. And the design of legal purification was to inform the Jews, that the pollutions, which they brought with them into the world at their birth, are washed away by the grace of God.

Hence too we ought to learn, how dreadful is the contagion of sin, which defiles, in some measure, the lawful order of nature. I do own that child-bearing is not unclean, and that what would otherwise be lust changes its character, through the sacredness of the marriage relation. But still the fountain of sin is so deep and abundant, that its constant overflowings stain what would otherwise be pure.

23. *As it is written in the Law* This was another exercise of piety which was discharged by Joseph and Mary. The Lord commanded, that all the males should be dedicated to him, in remembrance of their deliverance; because when the angel slew all the first-born of Egypt, (Exodus 12:29,) he had spared the first-born of Israel.

"On the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I hallowed unto me all the first-born in Israel, both man and beast: mine shall they be:
I am the Lord" (Numbers 3:13.)

They were afterwards permitted to redeem their first-born at a certain price. Such was the ancient ceremony: and, as the Lord is the common Redeemer of all,[193] he has a right to

192 "La corruption hereditaire procedante d'Adam precedoit un tel bien, et estoit plus ancienne." — "The hereditary corruption proceeding from Adam preceded such a benefit, and was more ancient."

193 "Veu que le Seigneur est Redempteur de tout le monde en general;" — "since the Lord is Redeemer of all the world at large."

claim us as his own, from the least to the greatest. Nor is it without a good reason, that Luke so frequently repeats the statement, that Joseph and Mary did what *was written in the law of the Lord* For these words teach us, that we must not, at our own suggestion, attempt any thing in the worship of God, but must obediently follow what he requires in his Word.

24. *And that they might offer a sacrifice* This *sacrifice* belonged to the ceremony of purification; lest any one should suppose that it was offered for the sake of redeeming the first-born. When the Evangelist mentions *a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons,* he takes for granted that his readers will understand, that Joseph and Mary were in such deep poverty, as not to have it in their power to offer a lamb. For this exception is expressly mentioned:

> "If she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall
> bring two turtles, or two young pigeons," (Leviticus 12:8.)

Is it objected, that the Magi had very recently supplied them with a sufficiency of gold to make the purchase? I reply: We must not imagine that they had such abundance of gold as to raise them suddenly from poverty to wealth. We do not read, that their camels were laden with gold. It is more probable that it was some small present, which they had brought solely as a mark of respect. The law did not rigorously enjoin, that the poor should spend their substance on a sacrifice, but drew a line of distinction between them and the rich, as to the kind of sacrifices, and thus relieved them from burdensome expense. There would be no impropriety in saying, that Joseph and Mary gave as much as their circumstances allowed, though they reserved a little money to defray the expenses of their journey and of their household.

25. *And, lo, there was a man in Jerusalem* The design of this narrative is to inform us that, though nearly the whole nation was profane and irreligious, and despised God, yet that a few worshippers of God remained, and that Christ was known to such persons from his earliest infancy. These were "the remnant" of whom Paul says, that they were preserved "according to the election of grace," (Romans 11:5.) Within this small band lay the Church of God; though the priests and scribes, with as much pride as falsehood, claimed for themselves the title of the Church. The Evangelist mentions no more than two, who recognised Christ at Jerusalem, when he was brought into the temple. These were Simeon and Anna. We must speak first of Simeon.

As to his condition in life we are not informed: he may have been a person of humble rank and of no reputation. Luke bestows on him the commendation of being *just* and *devout;* and adds, that he had the gift of prophecy: for *the Holy Spirit was upon him. Devotion* and *Righteousness* related to the two tables of the law, and are the two parts of which an upright life consists. It was a proof of his being *a devout man,* that he *waited for the consolation of Israel:* for no true worship of God can exist without the hope of salvation, which depends on the faith of his promises, and particularly on the restoration promised through Christ.

Now, since an expectation of this sort is commended in Simeon as an uncommon attainment, we may conclude, that there were few in that age, who actually cherished in their hearts the hope of redemption. All had on their lips the name of the Messiah, and of prosperity under the reign of David: but hardly any one was to be found, who patiently endured present afflictions, relying on the consolatory assurance, that the redemption of the Church was at hand. As the eminence of Simeon's piety was manifested by its supporting his mind in the hope of the promised salvation, so those who wish to prove themselves the children of God, will breathe out unceasing prayers for the promised redemption. For we, "have need of patience" (Hebrews 10:36) till the last coming of Christ.

And the Holy Spirit was upon him The Evangelist does not speak of "the Spirit of adoptions" (Romans 8:15,) which is common to all the children of God, though not in an equal degree, but of the peculiar gift of prophecy. This appears more clearly from the next verse and the following one, in which it is said, that he *received a revelation*[194] *from the Holy Spirit,* and that, by the guidance of the same Spirit, *he came into the temple* Though Simeon had no distinction of public office, he was adorned with eminent gifts, — with piety, with a blameless life, with faith and prophecy. Nor can it be doubted, that this divine intimation, which he received in his individual and private capacity, was intended generally for the confirmation of all the godly. Jesus is called *the Lord's Christ,* because he was *anointed*[195] by the Father, and, at the same time that he received the Spirit, received also the title, of King and Priest. Simeon is said to have come into the temple by *the Spirit;* that is, by a secret movement and undoubted revelation, that he might meet Christ.[196]

29. *Thou now sendest thy servant away* From this song it is sufficiently evident, that Simeon looked at the Son of God with different eyes from the eyes of flesh. For the outward beholding of Christ could have produced no feeling but contempt, or, at least, would never have imparted such satisfaction to the mind of the holy man, as to make him joyful and desirous to die, from having reached the summit of his wishes. The Spirit of God enlightened his eyes by faith, to perceive, under a mean and poor dress, the glory of the Son of God. He

194 "Responsum;" — "revelation."

195 It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader, that the simple meaning of the Hebrew word *Messiah,* and of the Greek word *Christ,* is *Anointed;* and that *the Lord's Christ* means *the Lord's Anointed,—a* designation which, as has been already remarked, (p. 92, note 2,) was familiarly applied to David and his successors on the throne for many generations, (2 Samuel 19:21; Lamentations 4:20,) but was afterwards restricted to "David's son," and "David's Lord," (Matthew 22:45,) whom Daniel emphatically calls *the Messiah, the Anointed,* (Daniel 9:25, 26.) — *Ed.*

196 "C'est a dire, par un mouvement secret et certaine revelation du Sainct Esprit, afin de s'y rencontrer a l'heure que Christ y estoit." — "That is to say, by a secret movement and certain revelation of the Spirit, in order that he might arrive at the hour when Christ was there."

says, that he would be sent away *in peace;* which means, that he would die with composure of mind, having obtained all that he desired.

But here a question arises. If he chose rather to depart from life, was it amidst distress of mind and murmuring, as is usually the case with those who die unwillingly, that Simeon was hurried away? I answer: we must attend to the circumstance which is added, *according to thy word* God had promised that Simeon would behold his Son. He had good reason for continuing in a state of suspense, and must have lived in some anxiety, till he obtained his expectation. This ought to be carefully observed; for there are many who falsely and improperly plead the example of Simeon, and boast that they would willingly die, if this or the other thing were previously granted to them; while they allow themselves to entertain rash wishes at their own pleasure, or to form vain expectations without the authority of the Word of God. If Simeon had said exactly, "Now I shall die with a composed and easy mind, because I have seen the Son of God," this expression would have indicated the weakness of his faith; but, as he had the *word,* he might have refused to die until the coming of Christ.

30. *For my eyes have seen* This mode of expression is very common in Scripture; but Simeon appears to denote expressly the bodily appearance of Christ, as if he had said, that he now has the Son of God present in the flesh, on whom the *eyes* of his mind had been previously fixed. By *saving*[197] I understand the matter of salvation: for in Christ are hid all the parts of salvation and of a happy life. Now if the sight of Christ, while he was yet a child, had so powerful an effect on Simeon, that he approached death with cheerfulness and composure; how much more abundant materials of lasting peace are now furnished to us, who have the opportunity of beholding our salvation altogether completed in Christ? True, Christ no longer dwells on earth, nor do we carry him in our arms: but his divine majesty shines openly and brightly in the gospel, and there do "we all," as Paul says, "behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord," — not as formerly amidst the weakness of flesh, but in the glorious power of the Spirit, which he displayed in his miracles, in the sacrifice of his death, and in his resurrection. In a word, his absence from us in body is of such a nature, that we are permitted to behold him sitting at the right hand of the Father. If such a sight does not bring peace to our minds, and make us go cheerfully to death, we are highly ungrateful to God, and hold the honor, which he has bestowed upon us, in little estimation.

197 "La ou nous avons rendu *Ton salut,* qui voudroit suivre le mot Grec de pres, il faudroit dire, *Ton Salutaire."* — "Where we have translated *Thy Salvation,* were we to follow closely the Greek word, we must say, *Thy Saving."—It* is evident that Calvin viewed σωτήριον, not with most of our lexicographers, as a noun of the same import with σωτηρία, *salvation,* but as the neuter of the adjective σωτήριος, which occurs in a memorable phrase, ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ σωτήριος, (Titus 2:11,) rendered in the English version, *the grace of God that bringeth salvation*. — *Ed.*

31. *Which thou hast prepared* By these words Simeon intimates, that Christ had been divinely appointed, that all nations might enjoy his grace; and that he would shortly afterwards be placed in an elevated situation, and would draw upon him the eyes of all. Under this term he includes all the predictions which relate: to the spread of Christ's kingdom. But if Simeon, when holding a little child in his arms, could stretch his mind to the utmost boundaries of the world, and acknowledge the power of Christ to be everywhere present, how much more magnificent ought our conceptions regarding him to be now that he has been set up as a, "standard to the people," (Isaiah 49:22,) and has revealed himself to the whole world.

32. *A light for the revelation of the Gentiles* Simeon now points out the purpose for which Christ was to be exhibited by the Father before all nations. It was that he might *enlighten the Gentiles,* who had been formerly in darkness, and might be *the glory of his people Israel* There is propriety in the distinction here made between the *people Israel* and the *Gentiles:* for by the right of adoption the children of Abraham "were nigh" (Ephesians 2:17) to God, while the *Gentiles,* with whom God had made no "covenants of promise," were "strangers" to the Church, (Ephesians 2:12.) For this reason, *Israel* is called, in other passages, not only the son of God, but his *first-born,* (Jeremiah 31:9;) and Paul informs us, that "Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Romans 15:8.) The preference given to *Israel* above the Gentiles is, that all without distinction may obtain salvation in Christ.

A light for revelation[198] means *for enlightening the Gentiles* Hence we infer, that men are by nature destitute of light, till Christ, "the Sun of Righteousness," (Malachi 4:2,) shine upon them. With regard to *Israel,* though God had bestowed upon him distinguished honor, yet all his glory rests on this single article, that a Redeemer had been promised to him.

198 "Lumen ad revelationem." — "La ou nous avons traduit, *Pour l'esclaircissement,* le mot Grec signifie quelque fois *Revelation:* mais Simeon vent dire ici, Pour esclairer ou illuminer les Gentils." — "Where we have translated, *For the enlightening,* the Greek word (ἀποχάλυψις) sometimes signifies *Revelation:* but Simeon means here, To enlighten or illuminate the Gentiles."

LUKE 2:33-39

Luke 2:33-39
33. And his father and mother were wondering about those things which were spoken of him. **34**. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary his mother, Lo, this (child) has been set for the ruin, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign, which is spoken against. **35**. But also a sword shall pierce thy own soul: that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. **36**. And there was Anna, a prophetess, daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher: she had advanced to a great age, and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity. **37**. And she was a widow of about eighty-four years, who departed not from the temple worshipping (God) with fastings and prayer day and night. **38**. And she, coming in at that hour, made acknowledgments also to God, [199] and spake of him to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem. **39**. And when they had completed all things according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.

33. *And his father and mother were wondering* Luke does not say, that they were astonished at it as a new thing, but that they contemplated with reverence, and embraced with becoming admiration, this prediction of the Spirit uttered by the lips of Simeon, so that they continued to make progress in the knowledge of Christ. We learn from this example that, when we have once come to possess a right faith, we ought to collect, on every hand, whatever may aid in giving to it additional strength. That man has made great proficiency in the word of God, who does not fail to admire whatever he reads or hears every day, that contributes to his unceasing progress in faith.

34. *And Simeon blessed them* If you confine this to Joseph and Mary, there will be no difficulty. But, as Luke appears to include Christ at the same time, it might be asked, What right had Simeon to take upon him the office of blessing Christ? "Without all contradiction," says Paul, "the less is blessed of the greater," (Hebrews 7:7.) Besides, it has the appearance of absurdity, that any mortal man should offer prayers in behalf of the Son of God. I answer: The Apostle does not speak there of every kind of blessing, but only of the priestly blessing: for, in other respects, it is highly proper in men to pray for each other. Now, it is more probable that *Simeon blessed them,* as a private man and as one of the people, than that he did so in a public character: for, as we have already said, we nowhere read that he was a priest. But there would be no absurdity in saying, that he prayed for the prosperity and advancement of Christ's kingdom: for in the book of Psalms the Spirit prescribes such a εὐλογία,—*a blessing* of this nature to all the godly.

199 "Louoit aussi le Seigneur;" — "praised also the Lord."

"Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;
we have blessed you in the name of the Lords"
(Psalm 118:26.)

Lo, this has been set This discourse was, no doubt, directly addressed by Simeon to Mary; but it has a general reference to all the godly. The holy virgin needed this admonition, that she might not (as usually happens) be lifted up by prosperous beginnings, so as to be less prepared for enduring afflictive events. But she needed it on another account, that she might not expect Christ to be received by the people with universal applause, but that her mind, on the contrary, might be fortified by unshaken courage against all hostile attacks. It was the design, at the same time, of the Spirit of God, to lay down a general instruction for all the godly. When they see the world opposing Christ with wicked obstinacy, they must be prepared to meet that opposition, and to contend against it undismayed. The unbelief of the world is—we know it—a great and serious hinderance; but it must be conquered, if we wish to believe in Christ. There never was a state of human society so happily constituted, that the greater part followed Christ. Those who will enlist in the cause of Christ must learn this as one of their earliest lessons, and must "put on" this "armor," (Ephesians 6:11,) that they may be steadfast in believing on him.

It was by far the heaviest temptation, that Christ was not acknowledged by his own countrymen, and was even ignominiously rejected by that nation, which boasted that it was the Church of God; and, particularly, that the priests and scribes, who held in their hands the government of the Church, were his most determined enemies. For who would have thought, that he was the King of those, who not only rejected him, but treated him with such contempt and outrage?

We see, then, that a good purpose was served by Simeon's prediction, that Christ was *set for the ruin of many in Israel* The meaning is, that he was divinely appointed to cast down and destroy many. But it must be observed, that the ruin of unbelievers results from their striking against him. This is immediately afterwards expressed, when Simeon says that Christ is *a sign, which is spoken against* Because unbelievers are rebels against Christ, they clash themselves against him, and hence comes their *ruin* This metaphor is taken from a mark shot at by archers,[200] as if Simeon had said, Hence we perceive the malice of men, and even the depravity of the whole human race, that all, as if they had made a conspiracy, rise in murmurs and rebellion against the Son of God. The world would not display such harmony in opposing the Gospel, if there were not a natural enmity between the Son of God and those men. The ambition or fury of the enemies of the Gospel carries them in various directions, faction splits them into various sects, and a wide variety of superstitions distinguishes idolat-

200 "Ceste facon de parler contient une metaphore prise des arbalestiers, ou autres qui visent au blanc." — "This way of speaking contains a metaphor, taken from archers, or others who aim at a mark."

ers from each other. But while they thus differ among themselves, they all agree in this, to oppose the Son of God. It has been justly observed, that the opposition everywhere made to Christ is too plain an evidence of human depravity. That the world should thus rise against its Creator is a monstrous sight. But Scripture predicted that this would happen, and the reason is very apparent, that men who have once been alienated from God by sin, always fly from him. Instances of this kind, therefore, ought not to take us by surprise; but, on the contrary, our faith, provided with this armor, ought to be prepared to fight with the contradiction of the world.

As God has now gathered an Israel to himself from the whole world, and there is no longer a distinction between the Jew and the Greek, the same thing must now happen as, we learn, happened before. Isaiah had said of his own age,

"The Lord will be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offense, to both the houses of Israel," (Isaiah 8:14.)

From that time, the Jews hardly ever ceased to dash themselves against God, but the rudest shock was against Christ. The same madness is now imitated by those who call themselves Christians; and even those, who lay haughty claims to the first rank in the Church, frequently employ all the power which they possess in oppressing Christ. But let us remember, all that they gain is, to be at length crushed and "broken in pieces," (Isaiah 8:9.)

Under the word *ruin* the Spirit denounces the punishment of unbelievers, and thus warns us to keep at the greatest possible distance from them; lest, by associating with them, we become involved in the same destruction. And Christ is not the less worthy of esteem, because, when he appears, many are ruined: for the "savor" of the Gospel is not less "sweet" and delightful to God, (2 Corinthians 2:15,16,) though it is destructive to the ungodly world. Does any one inquire, how Christ occasions the *ruin* of unbelievers, who without him were already lost? The reply is easy. Those who voluntarily deprive themselves of the salvation which God has offered to them, perish twice. *Ruin* implies the double punishment which awaits all unbelievers, after that they have knowingly and wilfully opposed the Son of God.

And for the resurrection This consolation is presented as a contrast with the former clause, to make it less painful to our feelings: for, if nothing else were added, it would be melancholy to hear, that Christ is "a stone of stumbling," which will break and crush, by its hardness, a great part of men. Scripture therefore reminds us of his office, which is entirely different: for the salvation of men, which is founded on it, is secure; as Isaiah also says, "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread; and he shall be for a sanctuary," or fortress of defense, (Isaiah 8:13,14.) And Peter speaks more clearly:

"To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house. Wherefore also it is contained in Scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion the head-stone of the corner, elect, precious,

and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious: but unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner," (1 Peter 2:4-7; Isaiah 28:16.)

That we may not be terrified by the designation bestowed on Christ, "a stone of stumbling," let it be instantly recollected, on the other hand, that he is likewise called the "cornerstone," on which rests the salvation of all the godly.[201]

Let it be also taken into account, that the former is accidental, while the latter is properly and strictly his office. Besides, it deserves our notice, that Christ is not only called the support, but the *resurrection* of the godly: for the condition of men is not one in which it is safe for them to remain. They must *rise from death,* before they begin to live.

35. *But also a sword shall pierce thy own soul* This warning must have contributed greatly to fortify the mind of the holy virgin, and to prevent her from being overwhelmed with grief, when she came to those distressing struggles, which she had to undergo. Though her faith was agitated and tormented by various temptations, yet her sorest battle was with the cross: for Christ might appear to be utterly destroyed. She was not overwhelmed with grief; but it would have required a heart of stone not to be deeply wounded: for the patience of the saints differs widely from stupidity.

That the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed There are some who connect this clause with a part of the former verse, that Christ is *set for the ruin and for the resurrection of many in Israel;* and who include in a parenthesis what we have just now explained about the *sword:* but it is better, I think, to refer it to the whole passage. The particle *that,* ὅπως ἄν, in this passage, does not strictly denote a cause, but merely a consequence. When the light of the Gospel arises, and persecutions immediately spring up, there is, at the same time, a disclosure of affections of the heart, which had been hitherto concealed: for the lurking-places of human dissimulation are so deep, that they easily remain hidden till Christ comes.[202] But Christ, by his light, discloses every artifice, and unmasks hypocrisy; and to him is properly ascribed the office of laying open the secrets of the heart. But when the cross is added to doctrine it tries the hearts more to the quick. For those who have embraced Christ by outward profession, often shrink from bearing the cross, and, when they see the Church exposed to numerous calamities, easily desert their post.

36. *And there was Anna, a prophetess* Luke mentions not more than two persons who received Christ; and this is intended to teach us, that whatever belongs to God, however small it may *be,* ought to be preferred by us to the whole world. The scribes and priests, no doubt, were then surrounded by great splendor; but, as the Spirit of God, whose *presence*

201 "La maitresse Pierre du coin, sur laquelle est fonde le salut de tous les enfans de Dieu." — "The headstone of the corner, on which is founded the salvation of all the children of God."

202 "Extra Christum;" — "jusqu'a ce que Jesus Christ viene."

was not at all enjoyed by those rulers,[203] dwelt in *Simeon* and *Anna,* those two persons are entitled to greater reverence than an immense multitude of those whose pride is swelled by nothing but empty titles. For this reason, the historian mentions Anna's *age,* gives her the designation of *prophetess,* and, thirdly, bears a remarkable testimony to her piety, and to the holiness and chastity of her life. These are the qualities that justly give to men weight and estimation. And certainly none are led astray by the dazzling and empty magnificence of outward show, but those who are drawn, by the vanity of their own minds, to take pleasure in being deceived.

She had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity This is intended to inform us, that she was a widow in the very prime of life. She had married young, and shortly afterwards lost her husband; and the circumstance of her not entering into a second marriage while she was in the rigor of her bodily frame,[204] is mentioned with the view of heightening the commendation of her chastity. What follows, that *she was a widow of about eighty-four years,* may be explained in two ways. Either that time had passed in her unmarried state,[205] or it was the whole period of her life. If you reckon the *eighty-four years* as the time of her widowhood, it will follow that she was more than a hundred years old: but I leave that matter doubtful. The Spirit of prophecy still shone in a very few, who served as tokens to attest the doctrine of the Law and the Jewish religion, till the coming of Christ. In a state of society so dissolute, the elect of God needed such aids to prevent them from being carried away.

37. *She departed not from the temple* This is a hyperbolical expression; but the meaning is plain, that Anna was almost constantly in the temple. Luke adds, that she *worshipped God with fastings and prayers day and night* Hence we infer, that she did not visit the temple for the mere purpose of performing the outward service, but that she added to it the other exercises of piety. It deserves our attention, that the same rule is not enjoined on all, and that all ought not to be led indiscriminately to copy those performances, which are here commended in a widow. Each person ought to make a judicious inquiry, what belongs to his own calling. Silly ambition has filled the world with apes, from superstitious persons seizing, with more "zeal" than "knowledges" (Romans 10:2,) every thing that they hear praised in the saints: as if the distinction of rank did not render a selection of employments necessary, that each person may answer to his own calling. What is here related of *Anna,* Paul applies

203 The word *rulers (principes)* appears to be here used sarcastically; for his own translation is," duquel estoyent du tout destituez les autres, combien que ce fussent les gouverneurs;" — "of which the others were entirely destitute, though they were rulers."

204 "Quum adhuc vegeto esset corpore."

205 "Il y avoit tant de temps que son mari estoit mort;" — "it was so long since her husband died."

in a particular manner to widows, (1 Timothy 5:5;) so that married people act a foolish part, if they regulate their life by an unsuitable model.

But there still remains another doubt. Luke appears to make *fastings* a part of divine *worship* But we must observe, that of the acts which relate to worship, some are simply required, and, as we are accustomed to say, are in themselves necessary; while others are accessory, and have no other design than to aid the former class. Prayers belong strictly to the worship of God. Fasting is a subordinate aid, which is pleasing to God no farther than as it aids the earnestness and fervency of prayer. We must hold by this rule, that the duties of men are to be judged according as they are directed to a proper and lawful end. We must hold, also, by this distinction, that *prayers* are a direct worship of God; while *fastings* are a part of worship only on account of their consequences. Nor is there any reason to doubt, that the holy woman employed *fastings* as an excitement to bewail those calamities of the Church which then existed.

38. *Made acknowledgment also to God*[206] The holy melody, which proceeded from the lips of Simeon and Anna, is praised by Luke, in order that believers may exhort each other to sing with one mouth the praises of God, and may give mutual replies. When he says, that Anna *spake of him to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem,* he again points out the small number of the godly. For the substance of faith lay in this expectation; and it is evident, that there were few who actually cherished it in their minds.

39. *They returned to Galilee* The departure to Egypt, I readily acknowledge, came between those events; and the fact mentioned by Luke, that they dwelt in *their own city Nazareth,* is later, in point of time, than the flight into Egypt, which Matthew relates, (Matthew 2:14.) But if there was no impropriety in one Evangelist leaving out what is related by another, there was nothing to prevent Luke from overleaping the period which he did not intend to mention, and passing at once to the following history. I am very far from agreeing with those who imagine that Joseph and Mary, after having finished the sacrifice of purification, returned to Bethlehem, to live there. Those persons are foolish enough to believe, that Joseph had a settled abode in a place where he was so little known, that he was unable to find a temporary lodging. Nor is it without a good reason that Luke says, with respect both to Joseph and Mary, that *Nazareth* was *their own city* We infer from it, that he never was an inhabitant of Bethlehem, though it was the place of his extraction.[207] As to the order of time, I shall presently give a more full explanation.

206 "Louoit aussi le Seigneur;" — "praised also the Lord."

207 "Combien que ce fust le pays de ses ancestres;" — "though it was the country of his ancestors."

MATTHEW 2:13-18

Matthew 2:13-18

13. And when they had departed, lo, the angel of the Lord appeared in dreams to Joseph, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I have told thee: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. **14**. And he, when awake, took the young child and his mother by night, and withdrew into Egypt: **15**. And was there until the death of Herod; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son. **16**. Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked by the Magi, was exceedingly enraged, and sent to slay [208] all the children that were in Bethlehem, and all its boundaries, [209] from two years old and under, according to the time which he had inquired at the Magi. **17**. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by Jeremiah the Prophet, when he says, **18**. A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, wailing, and much weeping: Rachel bewailing her children, and refused to receive consolation, because they are not.

13. *And when they had departed* How many days elapsed from the departure of the Magi, till Joseph was ordered to flee into Egypt, is not known, nor is it of much importance to inquire: only it is probable that the Lord spared Mary, till she was so far recovered from childbirth as to be able to perform the journey. It was a wonderful purpose of God, that he chose to preserve his Son by flight. The mind of Joseph must have been harassed by dangerous temptations, when he came to see that there was no hope but in flight: for in flight there was no appearance of divine protection. Besides, it was very difficult to reconcile the statement, that he who was to be the Savior of all, could not be preserved without the exertion of a mortal man. But, in preserving the life of his Son, God maintained such reserve, as to give some indications of his heavenly power, and yet not to make it so manifest as to prevent it from being concealed under the appearance of weakness: for the full time of glorifying Christ openly was not yet come. The angel predicts an event which was hidden, and unknown to men. That is an evident proof of divine guidance. But the angel orders him to defend the life of the child by flight and exile. This belongs to the weakness of flesh, to which Christ was subjected.

We are here taught, that God has more than one way of preserving his own people. Sometimes he makes astonishing displays of his power; while at other times he employs dark coverings or shadows, from which feeble rays of it escape. This wonderful method of preserving the Son of God under the cross teaches us, that they act improperly who prescribe to God a fixed plan of action. Let us permit him to advance our salvation by a diversity of

208 "Mittens interfecit;" — "sending slew."

209 "Et en toutes les marches d'icelle;" — "and in all the marches thereof."

methods; and let us not refuse to be humbled, that he may more abundantly display his glory. Above all, let us never avoid the cross, by which the Son of God himself was trained from his earliest infancy. This flight is a part of the foolishness of the cross, but it surpasses all the wisdom of the world. That he may appear at his own time as the Savior of Judea, he is compelled to flee from it, and is nourished by Egypt, from which nothing but what was destructive to the Church of God had ever proceeded. Who would not have regarded with amazement such an unexpected work of God?

Joseph immediately complies with the injunction of the Angel. This is another proof of the certainty of the dream: for such promptitude of obedience plainly shows, that he had no doubt whatever, that it was God who had enjoined him to take flight. This eager haste may wear somewhat of the aspect of distrust: for the flight *by night* had some appearance of alarm. But it is not difficult to frame an excuse. He saw that God had appointed a method of safety which was low and mean: and he concludes that he is at liberty to take flight in such a state of alarm as is commonly produced by extreme danger. Our fear ought always to be regulated by the divine intimations. If it agrees with them, it will not be opposed to faith.

Be thou there until I have told thee By these words the Angel declares, that the life of the child will, even in future, be the object of the divine care. Joseph needed to be thus strengthened, so as to conclude with certainty, that God would not only conduct him in the journey, but that, during his banishment, God would be his constant protector. And in this way God was pleased to allay many anxieties, with which the heart of the good man must have been perplexed, so that he enjoyed serenity of mind during his sojourn in Egypt. But for this, not a moment would have passed without numerous temptations, when he saw himself excluded not only from the inheritance promised by God to all his saints, — but from the temple, from sacrifices, from a public profession of his faiths, — and was living among the worst enemies of God, and in a deep gulf of superstitions. He carried with him, indeed, in the person of the child, all the blessings which the Fathers had hoped to enjoy, or which the Lord had promised to them: but as he had not yet made such proficiency in faith, and in the knowledge of Christ, he needed to be restrained by this injunction, *Be thou there until I have told thee,* that he might not be displeased at languishing in banishment from his country among the Egyptians.

15. *Out of Egypt have I called my Son* Matthew says that a prediction was fulfilled. Some have thought, that the intention of the prophet was different from what is here stated, and have supposed the meaning to be, that the Jews act foolishly in opposing and endeavoring to oppress the Son of God, because the Father *hath called him out of Egypt* In this way, they grievously pervert the words of the prophet, (Hosea 11:1,) the design of which is, to establish a charge of ingratitude against the Jews, who, from their earliest infancy, and from the commencement of their history, had found God to be a kind and generous Father, and yet

were provoking him by fresh offenses. Beyond all question, the passage ought not to be restricted to the person of Christ: and yet it is not tortured by Matthew, but skilfully applied to the matter in hand.

The words of the prophet ought to be thus interpreted: "When Israel was yet a child, I brought him out of that wretched bondage in which he had been plunged. He was formerly like a dead man, and Egypt served him for a grave; but I drew him out of it as from the womb, and brought him into the light of life." And justly does the Lord speak in this manner; for that deliverance was a sort of birth of the nation. Then were openly produced letters of adoption, when, by the promulgation of the law, they became "the Lord's portion," (Deuteronomy 32:9,) "a royal priesthood, and a holy nation," (1 Peter 2:9;) when they were separated from the other nations, and when, in short, God "set up his tabernacle" (Leviticus 26:11) to dwell in the midst of them. The words of the prophet import, that the nation was rescued from Egypt as from a deep whirlpool of death. Now, what was the redemption brought by Christ, but a resurrection from the dead, and the commencement of a new life? The light of salvation had been almost extinguished, when God begat the Church anew in the person of Christ. Then did the Church come out of Egypt in its head, as the whole body had been formerly brought out.

This analogy prevents us from thinking it strange, that any part of Christ's childhood was passed in Egypt. The grace and power of God became more illustrious, and his wonderful purpose was more distinctly seen, when light came out of darkness, and life out of hell. Otherwise, the sense of the flesh might have broken out here in contemptuous language, "Truly a Redeemer is to come out of Egypt!"[210] Matthew therefore reminds us, that it is no strange or unwonted occurrence for God to call his Son out of that country; and that it serves rather to confirm our faith, that, as on a former occasion, so now again, the Church of God comes out of Egypt. There is this difference, however, between the two cases. The whole nation was formerly shut up in the prison of Egypt; while, in the second redemption, it was Christ, the head of the Church alone, who was concealed there, but who carried the salvation and life of all shut up in his own person.

16. *Then Herod when he saw* Matthew speaks according to what Herod felt and thought about the matter. He believed that the Magi had deceived him, because they did not choose to take part in his wicked cruelty. He was rather taken in his own trickery, — in his base pretense, that he too intended to pay homage to the new King.

Josephus makes no mention of this history. The only writer who mentions it is Macrobius, in the Second Book of his *Saturnalia,* where, relating the jokes and taunts of Augustus, he says: *When he heard that, by Herod's command, the children in Syria under two years of*

210 "Qui croira que le Redempteur viene d'Egypte?" — "Who will believe that a Redeemer will come out of Egypt?"

age had been slain, and that his own son had been slain among the crowd, "I would rather," said he, "have been Herod's hog than his son." But the authority of Matthew alone is abundantly sufficient for us. Josephus certainly ought not to have passed over a crime so worthy of being put on record. But there is the less reason to wonder that he says nothing about the infants; for he passes lightly over, and expresses in obscure language, an instance of Herod's cruelty not less shocking, which took place about the same time, when he put to death all the Judges, who were called the Sanhedrim, that hardly a remnant might remain of the stock of David. It was the same dread, I have no doubt, that impelled him to both of these murders.

There is some uncertainty about the date.[211] Matthew says, that they were slain *from two years old and under, according to the time which he had inquired at the Magi:* from which we may infer that Christ had then reached that age, or at least was not far from being two years old. Some go farther, and conclude that Christ was about that age at the time when the Magi came. But I contend that the one does not follow from the other. With what terror Herod was seized when the report was widely spread about a new king who had been borne,[212] we have lately seen. Fear prevented him at that time from employing a traitor, in a secret manner, to make an investigation.[213] There is no reason to wonder that he was restrained, for some time, from the commission of a butchery so hateful and shocking, particularly while the report about the arrival of the Magi was still *recent.* It is certainly probable, that he revolved the crime in his mind, but delayed it till a convenient opportunity should occur. It is even possible, that he first murdered the Judges, in order to deprive the people of their leaders, and thus to compel them to look upon the crime as one for which there was no remedy.[214]

We may now conclude it to be a frivolous argument, on which those persons rest, who argue, that Christ was two years old when he was worshipped by the Magi, because, *according to the time when the star appeared,* Herod slew the children who were a little below two years old. Such persons take for granted, without any proper ground, that the star did not

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211 "Toutefois on ne sait pas certainement si ce fut en mesme temps." — "However, it is not known certainly if it was at the same time."

212 "Quand les premieres nouvelles vindrent de la naissance du nouveau Roy, et que le bruit en commenca a courir;" — "when the first news arrived of the birth of the new King, and when the noise about it began to spread."

213 "La crainte l'empescha lors d'envoyer secretement quelque traistre pour espier comme tout alloit;" — "fear prevented him at that time from employing some traitor to spy how all went."

214 "Et pent estre qu'il a premierement mis a mort les Juges, afin qu'apres avoir oste au poure peuple ses conducteurs, il peust sans contredit luy tenir le pie sui la gorge, et en faire a son plaisir." — "And perhaps he first put the Judges to death, that, after having deprived the wretched people of their leaders, he might without opposition, set his foot on their throat, and do with them at his pleasure."

appear till after that the Virgin had brought forth her child. It is far more probable, that they had been warned early, and that they undertook the journey close upon the time of the birth of Christ, that they might see the child when lately born, in the cradle, or in his mother's lap. It is a very childish imagination that, because they came from an unknown country, and almost from another world, they had spent about two years on the road. The conjectures stated by Osiander[215] are too absurd to need refutation.

But there is no inconsistency in the thread of the story which I propose, — that the Magi came when the period of child-bearing was not yet over, and inquired after *a king who had been born,* not after one who was already two years old; that, after they had returned to their own country, Joseph fled by night, but still in passing discharged a pious duty at Jerusalem, (for in so populous a city, where there was a constant influx of strangers from every quarter, he might be secure from danger;) that, after he had departed to Egypt, Herod began to think seriously about his own danger, and the ulcer of revenge, which he had nourished in his heart for more than a year and half, at length broke out. The adverb *then* (τότε) does not always denote in Scripture uninterrupted time,[216] but frequently occurs, when there is a great distance between the events.

18. A *voice was heard in Ramah* It is certain that the prophet describes (Jeremiah 31:15) the destruction of the tribe of Benjamin, which took place in his time: for he had foretold that the tribe of Judah would be cut off, to which was added the half of the tribe of Benjamin. He puts the mourning into the mouth of Rachel, who had been long dead. This is a *personification, (*προσωποποιϊα*,)* which has a powerful influence in moving the affections. It was not for the mere purpose of ornamenting his style, that Jeremiah employed rhetorical embellishments. There was no other way of correcting the hardness and stupidity of the living, than by arousing the dead, as it were, from their graves, to bewail those divine chastisements, which were commonly treated with derision. The prediction of Jeremiah having been accomplished at that time, Matthew does not mean that it foretold what Herod would do, but that the coming of Christ occasioned a renewal of that mourning, which had been experienced, many centuries before, by the tribe of Benjamin.

He intended thus to meet a prejudice which might disturb and shake pious minds. It might be supposed, that no salvation could be expected from him, on whose account, as soon as he was born, infants were murdered; nay more, that it was an unfavorable and disastrous omen, that the birth of Christ kindled a stronger flame of cruelty than usually burns amidst the most inveterate wars. But as Jeremiah promises a restoration, where a nation has been cut off, down to their little children, so Matthew reminds his readers, that this massacre

215 *Andrew Osiander,* (grandfather of Dr Andrew Osiander, a Lutheran divine,) author of several works which gained him not a little celebrity, among which is *Harmonia Evangelica — Ed.*

216 "Sans qu'il y ait rien entre-deux;" — "without there being anything between the two,"

would not prevent Christ from appearing shortly afterwards as the Redeemer of the whole nation: for we know that the whole chapter in Jeremiah, in which those words occur, is filled with the most delightful consolations. Immediately after the mournful complaint, he adds, "Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord, and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to thine own border," (Jeremiah 31:16, 17.)

Such was the resemblance between the former calamity which the tribe of Benjamin had sustained, and the second calamity, which is here recorded. Both were a prelude of the salvation which was shortly to arrive.[217]

217 "C'est que l'une et l'autre a est, comme le message apportant les nouvelles du salut qui approchoit." — "It is, that both were, as it were, the message bringing the tidings of the salvation which was approaching."

MATTHEW 2:19-23

Matthew 2:19-23

19. But when Herod was dead, lo, the angel of the Lord appeareth, by a dream, to Joseph in Egypt, **20**. Saying, Arise, and take the child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead who sought the life [218] , of the child. **21**. And he rose and took [219] the child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel. **22**. But when he had heard that Archelaus was reigning in Judea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: but, warned by a heavenly communication through a dream, he withdrew into the parts of Galilee. **23**. Having come there, he dwelt in the city [220] which is called Nazareth, that what had been spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, He shall be called a Nazarene.

19. *But when Herod was dead* These words show the perseverance of Joseph's faith. He kept his feet firm in Egypt, till he was recalled to his native country by a command of God. We see, at the same time, that the Lord never disappoints his own people, but renders them seasonable aid. It is probable that Joseph returned from Egypt immediately after the death of Herod, before Augustus Caesar had issued his decree, appointing Archelaus to be governor of Judea. Having been declared by his father's will to be successor to the throne, he undertook the whole charge of the government, but abstained from taking the title of king, saying that this depended on the will and pleasure of Caesar. He afterwards went to Rome, and obtained confirmation; only the name of king was refused, until he had merited it by his actions. The governor of Galilee was Philip, a man of gentle disposition, and almost like a private individual. Joseph complied with the suggestion of the angel, because, under a prince who had no delight in shedding blood, and who treated his subjects with mildness, there was less danger.

We must always bear in mind the purpose of God, in training his Son, from the commencement, under the discipline of the cross, because this was the way in which he was to redeem his Church. He bore our infirmities, and was exposed to dangers and to fears, that he might deliver his Church from them by his divine power, and might bestow upon it everlasting peace. His danger was our safety: his fear was our confidence. Not that he ever in his life felt alarm; but as he was surrounded, on every hand, by the fear of Joseph and Mary, he may be justly said to have taken upon him our fears, that he might procure for us assured confidence.

218 "Qui demandoyent l'ame, *ou la vie,* du petit enfant;" — "who demanded the soul, *or the life,* of the little child."

219 "Surgens assumpsit;" — "rising took." — "Joseph donc esveille print;" — "Joseph then awakened took."

220 "La cite."

23. *He shall be called a Nazarene* Matthew does not derive *Nazarene* from *Nazareth,* as if this were its strict and proper etymology, but only makes an allusion. The word ⊠⊠⊠, or *Nazarite,* signifies *holy and devoted to God,* and is derived from ⊠⊠, *to separate.* The noun ⊠⊠, indeed, signifies a *flower:*[221] but Matthew refers, beyond all doubt, to the former meaning. For we nowhere read that *Nazarites* meant *blooming* or *flourishing,* but persons who were *consecrated to God,* according to the directions given by the Law, (Numbers 6.) The meaning is: though it was by fear that Joseph was driven into a corner of Galilee, yet God had a higher design, and appointed *the city of Nazareth* as the place of Christ's residence, that he might justly be called a *Nazarite* But it is asked, who are the prophets that gave this name to Christ? for there is no passage to be found that answers to the quotation. Some think it a sufficient answer, that Scripture frequently calls him *Holy:* but that is a very poor explanation. For Matthew, as we perceive, makes an express reference to the very word, and to the ancient Nazarites, whose holiness was of a peculiar character. He tells us, that what was then shadowed out in the Nazarites, who were, in some sense, selected as the first-fruits to God, must have been fulfilled in the person of Christ.

But it remains to be seen, in what part of Scripture the prophets have stated that this name would be given to Christ. Chrysostom, finding himself unable to loose the knot, cuts it by saying, that many books of the prophets have perished. But this answer has no probability: for, though the Lord, in order to punish the indifference of his ancient people, deprived them of some part of Scripture, or left out what was less necessary, yet, since the coming of Christ, no part of it has been lost. In support of that view, a strange blunder has been made, by quoting a passage of Josephus, in which he states that Ezekiel left two books: for Ezekiel's prophecy of a new temple and kingdom is manifestly distinct from his other predictions, and may be said to form a new work. But if all the books of Scripture which were extant in the time of Matthew, remain entire to the present day, we must find somewhere the passage quoted from the prophets.

Bucer[222] has explained it, I think, more correctly than any other writer. He thinks that the reference is to a passage in the Book of Judges: *The child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb,* (Judges 13:5.) These words, no doubt, were spoken with regard to Samson.

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221 It would have been more correct to say that the noun ⊠⊠ signifies *a crown* than a flower. *"Thou* shalt put *the holy crown,"* ⊠⊠⊠ ⊠⊠ ⊠⊠, (Exodus 29:6.) "Thou hast profaned *his crown,"* ⊠⊠⊠, (Psalm 89:39.) It is satisfactory to have the support of so eminent a critic as Dr Tholuck, who, in his very correct edition of Calvin's Commentary on the New Testament, after the word florem, *flower,* places in brackets an emendation similar to what we have suggested: "*vel potius, diadematis insigne,"* —"or rather, the emblem of a crown." — *Ed.*

222 A contemporary of our author, who was greatly admired, not only for the extent of his learning in a very learned age, but for the soundness of his judgment. He is hardly ever mentioned but with deep respect. — *Ed.*

But Samson is called the "Redeemer" or "Deliverer"[223] of the people, only because he was a figure of Christ, and because the salvation, which was accomplished by his instrumentality, was a sort of prelude of the full salvation, which was at length exhibited to the world by the Son of God.[224] All that Scripture predicts, in a favorable manner, about Samson, may justly be applied to Christ. To express it more clearly, Christ is the original model: Samson is the inferior antitype.[225] When he assumed the character of a *Redeemer,*[226] we ought to understand, that none of the titles bestowed on that illustrious and truly divine office apply so strictly to himself as to Christ: for the fathers did but taste the grace of redemption, which we have been permitted to receive fully in Christ.

Matthew uses the word *prophets* in the plural number. This may easily be excused: for the Book of Judges was composed by many *prophets.* But I think that what is here said about *the prophets* has a still wider reference. For Joseph, who was a temporal Savior of the Church, and was, in many respects, a figure, or rather a lively image of Christ, is called *a Nazarite of his brethren,*[227] (Genesis 49:26; Deuteronomy 33:16.) God determined that the distinguished honor, of which he had given a specimen in Joseph, should shine again in Samson, and gave him the name of *Nazarite,* that believers, having received those early instructions, might look more earnestly at the Redeemer who was to come, who was to be *separated* from all,

"That he might be the first-born among many brethren,"

(Romans 8:29.)

223 The remaining words of the passage (Judges 13:5) are: *and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hands of the Philistines;* which our author interprets as having a prophetic reference to Christ. — *Ed.*

224 "Le salut qu'a receu le peuple par son moyen, a este comme une representation ayant quelques traces du vray et parfait salut, lequel finalement le Fils de Dieu a apporte et presente au monde." — "The salvation which the people received by his agency was, as it were, a representation, having some traces of the true and perfect salvation, which the Son of God finally brought and presented to the world."

225 "Pour le dire plus clairement en deux mots, Christ est le vray patron accompli en perfection, mais Samson est un pourtrait legerement tire et trac, dessus." — "To state it more clearly in two words, Christ is the true Defender fulfilled in perfection: but Samson is a portrait lightly traced and drawn below."

226 Deliverer.

227 In both of the passages quoted above, the words ⊠⊠⊠ ⊠⊠⊠are rendered, in the English version, *separated from his brethren.* This brings out pretty faithfully the meaning of ⊠⊠⊠, *separated,* but does not suggest the allusion, which Calvin supposes to be made to the peculiar acceptation given by the ceremonial law to ⊠⊠⊠, from which our word *Nazarite* is derived. Hebrew scholars must judge for themselves as to the probability of the allusion. Without entering into that inquiry, which would occupy more space than we could easily spare, we have thought it due to our Author to hint, that the two passages which he quotes, and which at first sight appear to have no bearing on his argument, contain the very *word* in questlon. — *Ed.*

Luke 2:40-47

Luke 2:40-47
40. And the child grew, and was invigorated in spirit, and was full of wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him. **41**. And his parents went every year to Jerusalem, to the feast of the Passover. **42**. And when he arrived [228] at twelve years, as they went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast, **43**. And when the days were finished, while they were returning, the child Jesus remained at Jerusalem, and his parents did not know it. [229] **44**. And thinking that he was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought him among their relatives and acquaintances. **45**. And when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. **46**. And it happened, after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing and putting questions to them: **47**. And all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.

40. *And the child grew* From the infancy of Christ Matthew passes immediately to his manifestation.[230] Luke relates here a single fact, which well deserved to be recorded. In the midst of his boyhood, Christ gave a specimen of his future office, or at least indicated, by a single attempt, what he would afterwards be. *The child grew, and was invigorated in spirit* These words show, that the endowments of his mind grew with his age.[231] Hence we infer, that this progress, or advancement, relates to his human nature: for the Divine nature could receive no increase.

But a question arises. From the time that he was conceived in his mother's womb, did he not abound in all fullness of spiritual gifts? for it appears absurd to say, that the Son of God wanted any thing that was necessary to perfection. The reply is easy. If it takes nothing from his glory, that he was altogether, "emptied," *(*ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσε, Philippians 2:6,) neither does it degrade him, that he chose not only to grow in body, but to make progress in mind. And certainly when the Apostle declares, that, "in all things he was made like unto his brethren,"(Hebrews 2:17,) and "was in all points tempted like as we are, sin excepted," (Hebrews 4:15,) he no doubt includes, that his soul was subject to ignorance. There is only this difference between us and him, that the weaknesses which press upon us, by a necessity

228 "Quum factus esset." — "Luy donc estant venu en l'aage de douze ans;" — "he then being come to the age of twelve years."

229 "Laquelle chose son pere et sa mere ne s'apperceurent point;" — "which thing his father and his mother did not perceive."

230 "Au temps de sa manifestation;" — "to the time of his manifestation."

231 "Avec l'aage les dons et graces d'Esprit croissoyent aussi et aug-mentoyent en luy." — "With age, the gifts and graces of the Spirit grew also and increased in him.".

which we cannot avoid, were undertaken by him voluntarily, and of his own accord. Christ received, in his human nature, according to his age and capacity, an increase of the free gifts of the Spirit,[232] that "out of his fullness" (John 1:16) he may pour them out upon us; for we draw grace out of his grace.

Some excessively timid persons restrict what is here said to outward appearance, and make the meaning to be, that Christ appeared to make progress, though, in point of fact, no addition was made to his knowledge. But the words have a quite different meaning, and this mistaken opinion is still more fully refuted by what Luke shortly afterwards adds, that *he grew in age and wisdom with God and man,* (ver. 52.) We are not at liberty to suppose, that knowledge lay concealed in Christ, and made its appearance in him in progress of time. There is no doubt whatever, that it was the design of God to express in plain terms, how truly and completely Christ, in taking upon him our flesh, did all that was necessary to effect his brotherly union with men.[233]

And yet we do not in this way suppose a double Christ:[234] for, though *God* and *man* are united in one person, it does not follow, that the human nature received what was peculiar to the Divine nature: but, so far as was necessary for our salvation, the Son of God kept his divine power concealed. What Irenaeus says, that his Divine nature was quiescent when he suffered,[235] I understand to refer, not only to bodily death, but to that amazing distress and agony of soul, which drew from him the complaint, "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46.) In a word, if we do not choose to deny, that Christ was made a real man, we ought not to be ashamed to acknowledge, that he voluntarily took upon him everything that is inseparable from human nature.

It is a foolish objection, that ignorance does not apply to Christ, because it is the punishment of sin: for the same thing might be said of death. Scripture declares, on the contrary, that he performed the office of Mediator: for all the punishment which we deserved was transferred from us to him.[236] Besides, it is a foolish mistake to say, that ignorance is the punishment of sin. For we must not suppose that Adam, while he remained in innocence,

232 "En dons et graces de l'Esprit;" — "in gifts and graces of the Spirit."

233 "Avoit vrayement et entierement prins tout ce qui estoit possible et propre pour accomplir de tous points la conjonction fraternelle de luy avec les hommes." — "Had truly and entirely taken all that was possible and fitted to complete, at all points, the brotherly union between him and men."

234 "Deux Christs, ou un double Christ;" — "two Christs, or a double Christ."

235 "Qu'il a souffert, sa Divinite ne demonstrant point sa vertu." — "That he suffered, his Divinity not demonstrating power."

236 "Pource qu'il a prins sur soy toutes les peines que nous avions meritees, afind nous en discharger." — "Because he took upon himself all the punishment which we had deserved, in order to discharge us from it."

knew all things. Angels also are, to some extent, ignorant, and yet they do not endure the punishment of sin.

A more refined argument is employed by some, that there was no ignorance in Christ, because ignorance is sin. But those persons assume a principle which is altogether false and groundless: otherwise, the angels must either be equal to God, or they must be sinful.[237] There is no doubt a sinful blindness of the human mind, which is justly reckoned a part of original sin: but here we ascribe to Christ no other ignorance than what may fall upon a man who is pure from every taint of sin.

He was invigorated in spirit, and was full of wisdom Luke thus declares, that whatever wisdom exists among men, and receives daily accessions, flows from that single fountain, from the Spirit of God. The following phrase is more general, *and the grace of God was upon him:* for it includes all the excellence of every description that shone brightly in Christ.

41. *And his parents went every year to Jerusalem* It is mentioned in commendation of the piety of Mary and Joseph, that they gave diligent attendance to the outward worship of God. It was not of their own accord, but by a divine command, that they undertook this annual journey. The law enjoins the, males "only to, appear before the Lord," (Exodus 23:17.) This arrangement does not entirely exclude females, but spares them by an exercise of kindness. This mark distinguishes the true religion from vain and wicked superstitions. The former confines itself within the limits of obedience to God, and of compliance with the enactments of his law. The latter wander, at their own pleasure, beyond the limits of God's word, without any fixed rule. The worship of the temple was, no doubt, infected with many corruptions, the priesthood was sold for money, and doctrine was involved in many errors. Yet, as legal ceremonies were still in force, and the outward rite of sacrifice was observed as it is laid down in the law, believers were bound to perform such exercises in testimony of their faith. The name *father* is here given to Joseph, not with strict accuracy, but according to the opinion generally entertained respecting him.

44. *And thinking that he was in the company* Many passages of Scripture show plainly, that those who came from a distance, at the festivals, to worship in the temple, were accustomed to travel in *companies.* There is no reason, therefore, to wonder that, on the first day, Joseph and Mary were less anxious about the child; and their subsequent conduct shows that this was not owing to indolence or carelessness.

46. *Sitting in the midst of the doctors* Rays of divine brightness must have evidently shone in this child: otherwise those haughty men would not have permitted him to sit along with them. Though it is probable that he occupied a lower seat, and not the rank of the

237 "Autrement il faudra que les Anges soyent pareils a Dieu, et qu'ils sachent tout: ou selon le dire de ces gensci, ils seront vicieux." — "Otherwise, the Angels must be equal to God, and know everything: or, according to the statement of these people, they must be sinful."

doctors, yet such disdainful men would not have condescended to give him an audience in a public assembly, if some divine power had not constrained them. This was a sort of prelude to his public calling, the full time of which had not yet arrived. In this way, however, he intended to give nothing more than a taste, which would immediately have faded from the recollection of men, had not Mary *kept* it for us *laid up in her heart,* (ver. 19, 51,) to bring it out afterwards, along with other treasures, for the use of all the godly.

47. *And all who heard him* Two things here claim our attention. *All who heard him were astonished:* for they reckoned it a miracle, that a child should frame his questions with such correctness and propriety. Again, they *heard* Christ, and thus acted the part rather of scholars than of teachers. He had not yet been called by the Father, to avow himself a public teacher of the Church, and therefore satisfied himself with putting modest questions to the doctors. Yet there is no room to doubt that, in this first attempt, he already began to tax their perverse way of teaching: for what Luke afterwards says about *answers,* I consider as denoting, agreeably to the Hebrew idiom, any kind of discourse.

LUKE 2:48-52

Luke 2:48-52
48. And when they saw him, they wondered; and his mother said to him, Son, why hast thou done thus to us? Lo, thy father and I grieving were seeking for thee. **49**. And he saith to them, Why is it that ye were seeking me? Did ye not know that I must be in those things which belong to my Father? **50**. And they did not understand the discourse which he spoke to them. **51**. And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth. And he was subject to them: but his mother kept all these words in her heart. **52**. And Jesus made progress in wisdom and age, and in favor with God and men.

48. *And his mother said to him* Those who think that the holy virgin spake in this manner, for the purpose of showing her authority, are, in my opinion, mistaken. It is even possible, that it was not till they were apart, and the witnesses had withdrawn, that she began to expostulate with her son, after they had left the assembly. However that may be, this complaint was not the result of ambition, but was the expression of grief, which had lasted three days.[238] Yet the manner of her complaint, as if she had received an injury, shows how ready we are by nature to defend our own rights, even without paying regard to God. The holy virgin would a thousand times[239] rather have died, than deliberately preferred herself to God: but, in the indulgence of a mother's grief, she falls into it through inadvertency. And undoubtedly this example warns us, how jealous we ought to be of all the affections of the flesh, and what care we ought to exercise, lest, by being too tenacious of our rights, and following our own desires, we defraud God of his honor.

49. *Did ye not know?* Our Lord justly blames his mother, though he does it in a gentle and indirect manner. The amount of what he says is, that the duty which he owes to God his Father, ought to be immeasurably preferred to all human duties; and that, consequently, earthly parents do wrong in taking it amiss, that they have been neglected in comparison of God. And hence we may infer the general doctrine, that whatever we owe to men must yield to the first table of the law, that God's authority over us may remain untouched.[240] Thus we ought to obey kings, and parents, and masters,[241] but only in subjection to God:

238 "Mais l'ennuy et la fascherie qu'elle avoit eue trois jours durant l'a fait ainsi parler." — "But the uneasiness and distress, which she had had for three days, made her speak in this manner."

239 "Centies;" — "mille fois."

240 "Que tout ce qui est deu aux hommes, est au dessous de la premiere Table de la Loy, et doit tenir le second lieu, afin que toujours Dieu ait sa puissance et son authorite entiere." — "That all that is due to men is below the first Table of the Law, and ought to hold the second plane, in order that God may always have his power and his authority entire."

241 "Dominis;" — "maistres et seigneurs;" — "masters and lords."

that is, we must not, for the sake of men, lessen or take away any thing from God. And, indeed, a regard to the superior claims of God does not imply a violation of the duties which we owe to men.

In those things which belong to my Father This expression intimates, that there is something about him greater than man. It points out also the chief design of his being sent into the world, which was, that he might discharge the office enjoined upon him by his heavenly Father. But is it not astonishing, that Joseph and Mary *did not understand* this answer, who had been instructed by many proofs, that Jesus is the Son of God? I reply: Though they were not wholly unacquainted with Christ's heavenly origin, yet they did not comprehend, in every respect, how he was intent on executing his heavenly Father's commands: for his calling had not yet been expressly revealed to them. Mary *kept in her heart* those things which she did not fully understand. Let us learn from this, to receive with reverence, and *to lay up* in our minds, (like the seed, which is allowed to remain for some time under grounds) those mysteries of God which exceed our capacity.

51. *And he was subject to them* It was for our salvation that Christ took upon him this low estate, — that the Lord and head of angels voluntarily became *subject to* mortal creatures. Such was the purpose of God, that Christ should remain, for some time, under a shadow, bearing the name of Joseph. Though this subjection, on the part of Christ, arose from no necessity which he could not have avoided, yet, as he had taken upon him human nature on the condition of being subject to parents, and had assumed the character both of a man and of a servant, — with respect to the office of Redeemer, this was his lawful condition. The more cheerfully, on this account, ought every one to bear the yoke which the Lord has been pleased to lay upon him.[242]

242 "D'autant plus faut-il que chacun de nous s'assujettisse de bon coeur, st ploye le col sous le joug auquel il plaira a Dieu de nous soumettre." — "So much the more must every one of us submit heartily, and bend the neck under the yoke, to which it shall please God to subject us."

MATTHEW 3:1-6; MARK 1:1-6; LUKE 3:1-6

Matthew 3:1-6	Mark 1:1-6	Luke 3:1-6
1. Now in those days John the Baptist comes, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, **2**. And saying, Repent: [243] for the kingdom of heaven is at hand, **3**. For this is he, of whom it has been spoken by Isaiah the prophet, who says, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. **4**. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey. **5**. Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan. **6**. And were baptized in Jordan by him, confessing their sins.	**1**. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; **2**. As it is written in the prophets, Lo, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee. **3**. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. **4**. John was baptizing in the wilderness, preaching the baptism of repentance, for the forgiveness of sins. **5**. And all the country of Judea, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, went out to him, and were all baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. **6**. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a leathern girdle about his loins, and he ate locusts and wild honey.	**1**. And in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the country of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, **2**. While Annas and Caiaphas were high priests, the word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness. **3**. And he came into all the country surrounding Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. **4**. As it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. **5**. Every valley shall be filled up, and every mountain and hill shall be laid low, and those things which are crooked shall become straight, and those which are rough shall become plain ways. **6**. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

243 "Ammendez-vous, *ou, convertissez, ou, repentez.*"— "Reform yourselves, or be *converted,* or, *repent.*"

Mark 1:1. *The beginning of the Gospel.* Though what we have hitherto taken out of Matthew and Luke is a part of *the Gospel,* yet it is not without reason that Mark makes *the beginning of the Gospel* to be the preaching of John the Baptist. For the Law and the Prophets then came to an end, (John 1:17.) "*The Law and the Prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached*," **(**Luke 16:16**.)** And with this agrees most fully the quotation which he makes from the Prophet Malachi, (3:1.) In order to inflame the minds of his people with a stronger desire of the promised salvation, the Lord had determined to leave them, for a time, without new prophecies. We know that the last of the true and lawful prophets was Malachi.

That the Jews, in the meantime, may not faint with hunger, he exhorts them to continue under the Law of Moses, until the promised redemption appear. He mentions *the law* only, (John 1:17,) because the doctrine of the Prophets was not separate from the law, but was merely an appendage and fuller exposition of it, that the form of government in the Church might depend entirely on the Law. It is no new or uncommon thing in Scripture, to include the Prophets under the name of *the Law:* for they were all related to it as their fountain or design. The Gospel was not an inferior appendage to the Law, but a new form of instruction, by which the former was set aside.

Malachi, distinguishing the two conditions of the Church, places the one under the Law, and commences the other with the preaching of John. He unquestionably describes the Baptist, when he says, "Behold, I send my messenger," (Malachi 3:1:) for, as we have already said, that passage lays down an express distinction between the Law and the new order and condition of the Church. With the same view he had said a little before, (which is quoted by Mark, [9:13;] for the passages are quite similar,) "Behold, I send you Elijah the Prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord," (Malachi 4:5.) Again,

"Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple," (Malachi 3:1.)

In both passages, the Lord promises a better condition of his Church than had existed under the Law, and this unquestionably points out *the beginning of the Gospel* But *before the Lord came* to restore the Church, a forerunner or herald was to come, and announce that he was at hand. Hence we infer, that the abrogation of the Law, and *the beginning of the Gospel,* strictly speaking, took place when John began to preach.

The Evangelist John presents to us Christ clothed in flesh, "the Word made flesh," (John 1:14;) so that his birth and the whole history of his appearance are included in the Gospel. But here Mark inquires, when the Gospel began to be published, and, therefore, properly begins with John, who was its first minister. And with this view the Heavenly Father chose that the life of his Son should be buried, as it were, in silence, until the time of the full revelation arrived. For it did not happen without the undoubted Providence of God, that the

Evangelists leave out the whole period which Christ spent in private, and pass at once from his earliest infancy to his thirtieth year, when he was openly exhibited to the world, invested with his public character as a Redeemer; Luke excepted, who slightly touches one indication of his future calling, which occurred about his twelfth year, (Luke 2:42.)

It had a very close connection with this object, that we should be informed, first, that Christ is a true man, (John 1:14,) and next, that he is "*the Son of Abraham and of David*," (Matthew 1:1;) as to both of which, the Lord has been pleased to give us an attestation. The other matters which we have examined, relating to *"the shepherds*," (Luke 2:8,) the *"Magi,"* (Matthew 2:1,) and *"Simeon,"* (Luke 2:25,) were intended to prove his Divinity. What Luke relates about John and his father Zacharias, (Luke 1:5,) was a sort of preparation for the Gospel.

There is no impropriety in the change of the person which is here made, in quoting the words of Malachi. According to the prophet, God says, *I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way Before Me*. Mark introduces God as addressing the Son, *Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way Before Thee*. But we see that Mark had no other intention, than to express more clearly the prophet's meaning. Mark designates Christ *the Son of God* The other Evangelists testify that he was born of the seed of Abraham and David, and therefore was *the Son of man,* (Matthew 8:20.) But Mark shows us, that no redemption is to be expected but from *the Son of God*

Matthew 3:1 *Now in those days* **Luke 3:1.** *And in the fifteenth year* It could not be gathered from Matthew and Mark in what year of his age John began to preach: but Luke shows sufficiently, that he was about thirty years of age. The ancient writers of the Church are almost unanimously agreed, that he was born fifteen years before the death of Augustus. His successor Tiberius had held the government of the Roman Empire for fifteen years, when the same John began to preach. In this way are made up the thirty years which I have mentioned. Hence it follows, that he did not long discharge the office of teacher, but, in a short time, gave way to Christ; for we shall soon find, that Christ also was baptized in the thirtieth year of his age, when he was immediately installed into the discharge of his public office. Now as John, the morning-star, or dawn, was immediately followed by Christ, "the Sun of Righteousness," (Malachi 4:2,) there is no reason to wonder, that John disappeared, in order that Christ might shine alone in greater brightness.

Luke 3:1. *When Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea* It is probable that this was the second year of Pilate's government: for since Tiberius had held the reins of government, he had, as Josephus informs us, (xviii. 2:2,) appointed Valerius Gratus to be governor of Judea, in room of Annius Rufus. This change might take place in his second year. The same Josephus writes, that Valerius was governor of Judea for "eleven years, when Pontius Pilate came as his successor," (Ant. 18:2:2.) Pilate, therefore, had governed the province for two years, when John began to preach the Gospel. This Herod, whom Luke makes tetrarch of

Judea, was the second heir of Herod the Great, and succeeded to his father by will. Archelaus had received the ethnarchy of Judea, but, when he was banished to Vienna (Jos. Wars, 2, vii. 3) by Augustus, that portion fell into the hands of the Romans. Luke mentions here two sons of Herod, — Herod Antipas, who had been made tetrarch of Galilee, and governed Samaria and Peraea, — and Philip, who was tetrarch of Trachonitis and Iturea, and reigned from the sea of Tiberias, or Gennesareth, to the foot of Lebanon, which is the source of the river Jordan.

Lysanias has been falsely supposed to be the son of Ptolemy Mennaeus, King of Chalcis, who had been long before put to death by Cleopatra, about thirty years before the birth of Christ, as Josephus relates, (Ant. 15:4:1.) He could hardly even be the grandson of Ptolemy, who, as the same Josephus records, kindled the Parthian war, (Wars, 1, xiii. 1;) for then he must have been more than sixty years of age at the time of which Luke speaks. Besides, as it was under Antigonus that the Parthian war commenced, he must even then have been a full-grown man. Now Ptolemy Mennaeus died not long after the murder of Julius Caesar, during the triumvirate of Lepidus, Antony, and Octavius, (Jos. Wars, 1, xiii. 1.) But as this grandson of Ptolemy bore the name of Lysanias as well as his father, he might have left a son who had the same surname. Meanwhile, there can be no hesitation in rejecting the error of those who make Lysanias to live sixty years after he had been slain by Cleopatra.

The word *Tetrarch* is here used in a sense not quite accurate, as if the whole country had been divided into four parts. But as at first there was a fourfold division into districts, so afterwards, when other changes took place, the names *Tetrarch* and *Tetrarchies* were retained by way of honor. In this sense Pliny enumerates seventeen *tetrarchies* of one country.

Luke 3:2. *Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests* It is certain, that there never were two persons who held the office of *high priest* at the same time. Josephus states, that Valerius Gratus made Caiaphas *high priest,* a short time before he left the government. During the time that Pilate was governor of Judea, Josephus does not speak of him as having made any change in this respect;[244] but, on the contrary, states that, when Pilate had been recalled from the government, and sent to plead his cause at Rome, Vitellius, who was at that time governor of Syria, reduced Caiaphas to a private rank, and transferred the high

244 The whole passage is remarkable, and proves that the appointment to the sacred office of *high priest* was entirely at the disposal of the Roman Governor. "This man (Valerius Gratus) deprived Ananus of the high priesthood, and appointed Ishmael, the son of Phabi, to be high priest. He also deprived him in a little time, and ordained Eleazar, the son of Ananus, who had been high priest before, to be high priest: which office, when he had held for a year, Gratus deprived him of it, and gave the high priesthood to Simon, the son of Camithus; and, when he had possessed that dignity no longer than a year, Joseph Caiaphas was made his successor. When Gratus had done those things, he went back to Rome, after he had tarried in Judea eleven years, when Pontius Pilate came as his successor." — (*Ant. 18:2:2.*)

priesthood to Jonathan, the son of Ananus, (Ant. 18:4:3.) When Luke says that there were two *high priests,* we must not understand him to mean, that both held the same title, but that the honor of the priesthood was partly shared with him by Annas his father-in-law. Luke's narrative indicates such a state of trouble and confusion, that, though there was not more than one person who was actually *high priest,* the sacred office was torn in pieces by ambition and tyranny.

The word of the Lord came upon John Before relating, as the other Evangelists do, that John began to exercise his office of teaching, Luke asserts that he was divinely called to that office: and he does so, in order to assure us, that the ministry of John carried undoubted authority. Why the interpreters have chosen to translate the word, ἐπὶ Ἰωάννην, *UPON John,* instead of *TO John,* I do not see: but because there is no ambiguity as to the meaning, that this commission was entrusted to him, and that he received a command to preach, I have followed the received version. Hence infer, that there are no regular teachers, but those on whom God has conferred the office; and that it is not enough to have the word of God, if there be not likewise a special calling.

Matthew and Mark do not speak of the preaching of John as extending beyond *the wilderness,* while Luke says, that he *came into all the country around Jordan* These statements may be reconciled by observing, that John discharged the office of teaching among the neighbors, with whom he dwelt; but that his Gospel spread more widely, and became known in many places, so that the report of it, in a short time, reached Jerusalem. Indeed, the whole of that tract of the Jordan might be called a *wilderness:* for the word does not mean "a solitude," but "a rough, and mountainous, and thinly inhabited district."

Matthew 3:2. *Repent ye* Matthew differs from the other two Evangelists in this respect, that he relates the substance of John's doctrine, as uttered by John himself, while they relate it in their own words; though Mark has one word more than Luke: for he says, *he came Baptizing, and preaching the baptism of repentance* But in substance there is the most perfect agreement: for they all connect *repentance* with *the forgiveness of sins.* The *kingdom of God* among men is nothing else than a restoration to a happy life; or, in other words, it is true and everlasting happiness. When John says, that *the kingdom of God is at hand,* his meaning is, that men, who were alienated from the righteousness of God, and banished from *the kingdom of heaven,* must be again gathered to God, and live under his guidance. This is accomplished by a free adoption and *the forgiveness of sins,* by which he reconciles to himself those who were unworthy. In a word, the kingdom of heaven is nothing else than "newness of life," (Romans 6:4,) by which God restores us to the hope of a blessed immortality. Having rescued us from the bondage of sin and death, he claims us as his own; that, even while our pilgrimage on earth continues, we may enjoy the heavenly life by faith: for he

> "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ,"
>
> (Ephesians 1:3.)

Though we are like dead men, yet we know that our life is secure; for it "is hid with Christ in God," (Colossians 3:3.)

From this doctrine, as its source, is drawn the exhortation to *repentance.* For John does not say, "Repent ye, and in this way *the kingdom of heaven* will afterwards be *at hand;"* but first brings forward the grace of God, and then exhorts men to *repent* Hence it is evident, that the foundation of repentance is the mercy of God, by which he restores the lost. In no other sense is it stated by Mark and Luke, that he *preached repentance for the forgiveness of sins* Repentance is not placed first, as some ignorantly suppose, as if it were the ground of the forgiveness of sins, or as if it induced God to begin to be gracious to us; but men are commanded to repent, that they may receive the reconciliation which is offered to them. Now, as the undeserved love of God — by which he receives into his favor wretched men, "not imputing their trespasses unto them," (2 Corinthians 5:19) — is first in order; so it must be observed, that pardon of sins is bestowed upon us in Christ, not that God may treat them with indulgence, but that he may heal us from our sins. And, indeed, without hatred of sin and remorse for transgressions, no man will taste the grace of God. But a definition of *repentance* and *faith* may explain more fully the manner in which both are connected; which leads me to handle this doctrine more sparingly.

With regard to the meaning of the present passage, it is proper to observe, that the whole Gospel consists of two parts, — *forgiveness of sins,* and *repentance* Now, as Matthew denominates the first of these *the kingdom of heaven,* we may conclude, that men are in a state of deadly enmity with God, and altogether shut out from the heavenly kingdom, till God receives them into favor. Though John, when he introduces the mention of the grace of God, exhorts men to repentance, yet it must not be forgotten that repentance, not less than the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom, is the gift of God. As he freely pardons our sins, and delivers us, by his mercy, from the condemnation of eternal death, so also does he form us anew to his image, that we may live unto righteousness. As he freely adopts us for his sons, so he regenerates us by his Spirit, that our life may testify, that we do not falsely,[245] address him as our Father. In like manner, Christ washes away our sins by his blood, and reconciles our Heavenly Father to us by the sacrifice of his death; but, at the same time, in consequence of

"our old man being crucified with him, and the body of sin destroyed,"

(Romans 6:6)

he makes us "alive" unto righteousness. The sum of the Gospel is, that God, through his Son, takes away our sins, and admits us to fellowship with him, that we, *"denying ourselves"* and our own nature, may "live soberly, righteously, and godly," and thus may exercise ourselves on earth in meditating on the heavenly life.

245 "Ce n'est pas a fausses enseignes ni par feintise." — "It is not with false colors, nor by hypocrisy."

Luke 3:3. *Preaching the baptism of repentance* This form of expression shows first, generally, what is the right use of the Sacraments; and next, why *baptism* was instituted, and in what it consists. A sacrament, then, is not a dumb ceremony, exhibiting some unmeaning pomp without doctrine; but the Word of God is joined to it, and gives life to the outward ceremony. By *the Word* I mean, not mutterings of a magical character, made by some exorcist between his teeth, but what is pronounced with a clear and distinct voice, and leads to the edification of faith. For we are not simply told, that John *baptized unto repentance,* as if the grace of God were contained in a visible sign; but that he explained, in his preaching, the advantage of baptism, that the sign, through the word preached, might produce its effect. This is the peculiarity of baptism, that it is said to be an outward representation of *repentance for the forgiveness of sins* Now, as the meaning, power, and nature of that baptism are the same as ours, if we judge of the figure from its true import, it is incorrect to say, that the baptism of John is different from the baptism of Christ.[246]

Matthew 3:3. *The yoke of one crying in the wilderness* Though this passage of the prophet Isaiah (40:3) ought not to be limited exclusively to John, yet he is one of the number of those to whom it certainly refers. After having spoken of the destruction of the city, and of the awful calamities that would befall the people, he promises a restoration that would follow. His words are,

"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God,"

(Isaiah 40:1.)

When the temple had been thrown down, and sacrifices abolished, and the people led away into captivity, their affairs seemed to be desperate. And as their ears had been deaf to the uninterrupted voice of the prophets, the Lord kept silence for a time.[247] That pious minds may not be cast down during this melancholy silence, the prophet announces, that other preachers of grace will yet arise, to awaken in the people a hope of salvation. Such were Zechariah, Haggai, Malachi, and the like.[248] But as the restoration promised is perpetual,

246 "Maintenant puis que le Baptesme de Jean a eu mesme signification, vertu et propriete que le nostre, si nous voulons juger de la figure et du signe selon la chose signifee, c'est 'a dire la verite, nous trouverons que le Baptesme administre par Christ, n'a point este autre que celuy que Jean a administre."—"Now, since the baptism of John had the same meaning, power, and nature as ours, if we wish to judge of the figure and of the sign according to the thing signified, that is to say the reality, we shall find that the Baptism administered by Christ was no other than that which John administered."

247 "Et pource qu'ils avoyent auparavant ferme leurs aureilles a la voix des prophetes, qui journellement et sans cesse, parloyent a eux, le Seigneur se teut, et laissa de parler a eux pour un temps." — "And because they had formerly shut their ears to the voice of the prophets, who daily and unceasingly spoke to them, the Lord was silent, and ceased to speak to them for a time."

248 "Malachie, Esdras, et autres semblables personnages." — "Malachi, Ezra, and other similar characters."

and not for a time only, and as Isaiah refers chiefly to the redemption, which was to be expressed at the coming of Christ, John the Baptist is justly considered the chief minister of consolation.

Next follows in the words of the prophet, *The voice of one crying* That *voice* is contrasted with the temporary silence,[249] which I have just mentioned: for the Jews were to be deprived, for a time, of the instruction, which they had wickedly despised. The word *wilderness* is here used metaphorically for *desolation,* or the frightful ruin of the nation, such as existed in the time of the captivity. It was so dismally shattered, that it might well be compared to a *wilderness* The prophet magnifies the grace of God. "Though the people," says he, "have been driven far from their country, and even excluded from the society of men, yet the voice of God will yet be heard in *the wilderness,* to revive the dead with joyful consolation." When John began to preach, Jerusalem was in this sense a *wilderness:* for all had been reduced to wild and frightful confusion. But the very sight of a visible *wilderness* must have had a powerful effect on stupid and hardened men, leading them to perceive that they were in a state of death, and to accept the promise of salvation, which had been held out to them. We now see, that this prediction actually relates to John, and is most properly applied to him.

Prepare the way of the Lord The prophet undoubtedly addresses Cyrus and the Persians, whose agency the Lord employed in this matter. The meaning is: by his wonderful power, God will open a way to his people through impassable forests, through broken rocks, through a sandy desert; for he will have at hand the ministers of his grace, to remove all hindrances out of the way. But that was a shadowy anticipation of redemption. When the spiritual truth is about to appear, John is sent to remove obstacles. And even now the same voice sounds in our ears, that we may *prepare the way of the Lord:* that is, that we may take out of the way those sins which obstruct the kingdom of Christ, and thus may give access to his grace. To the same purpose are the following words of the prophet: *the crooked shall be made straight,* (Isaiah 40:4.) All that they mean is: there are intricate and crooked windings in the world, but through such appalling difficulties the Lord makes a way for himself, and breaks through, by incredible means, to accomplish our salvation.

Luke 3:6 *And all flesh shall see the salvation of God* That salvation will not be at all obscure, or experienced by a small number of persons, but will strike every eye, and will be common to all. Hence it follows that this prediction was far from being accomplished, when the people returned from Babylon:[250] for though the Lord gave, at that time, a memorable display of his grace, yet he did not reveal his *salvation* to the whole world. On the contrary, the prophet's design was, to present the uncommon excellence of the salvation which was

249 "Anquel il n'y avoit personne qui parlast au nom de Dieu;" — "in which there was nobody who spoke in the name of God."

250 "In populi reditu;" — "quand le peuple est retourne de Babylone."

to be manifested, in contrast with God's former benefits, and thus to inform believers, that the dispensations of God towards his Church had never been so remarkable, nor his power so illustriously displayed in their deliverance. *Flesh* is here put for *men,* without being intended to denote their depravity.[251]

Matthew 3:4. *And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair* The Evangelist does not desire us to reckon it as one of John's chief excellencies, that he followed a rough and austere way of living, or even that he avoided a moderate and ordinary degree of elegance: but, having already stated that he was an inhabitant of the mountains, he now adds, that his food and clothing were adapted to his residence. And he mentions this, not only to inform us, that John was satisfied with the food and dress of the peasants, and partook of no delicacies; but that, under a mean and contemptible garb, he was held in high estimation by men of rank and splendor. Superstitious persons look upon righteousness as consisting almost entirely of outward appearances, and have commonly thought, that abstinence of this kind was the perfection of holiness. Nearly akin to this is the error, of supposing him to be a man who lived in solitude, and who disdained the ordinary way of living; as the only superiority of hermits and monks is, that they differ from other people. Nay, gross ignorance has gone so far that, out of *camel's hair* they have made an entire skin.

Now, there can be no doubt, that the Evangelist here describes a man of the mountains,[252] widely distant from all the refinement and delicacies of towns,—not only satisfied with such food as could be procured, but eating only what was fit to be used in its natural state, such as *wild honey,* which is supplied by that region in great abundance, and *locusts,* with which it also abounds. Or he may have intended to point out that, when a man of mean aspect, and without any polite accomplishments, appeared in public life, it was attended by this advantage, that the majesty of God shone alone in him, and yet struck all with admiration. For we must observe what is added, that there was a great concourse of people from all directions; from which we infer, that his fame was very widely spread.[253] Or the Evangelist may have signified the design of God, to present, in the person of John, a singular instance of frugality, and, in this manner, to fill the Jews with reverence for his doctrine, or at least to convince them of ingratitude, according to that saying of our Lord, *John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine,* (Luke 7:33.)

Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:5. *And were baptized, confessing their sins* This *confession* was a testimony of *repentance:* for, as the Lord, in the sacraments, brings himself under obligation

251 "Le mot de *Chair* n'est pas ice mis pour denoter la corruption de nature, mais il signifie simplement les hommes." — "The word *Flesh* is not put here to denote the corruption of nature, but means simply *men.*"

252 "Montanum hominem;" — "un homme suivant les montagnes."

253 "Qu il a ete merveilleusement grand bruit de luy par tout le pays." — "That there was an astonishingly great noise about him through all the country."

to us, as if he had given his own hand-writing, so it is our duty, on the other hand, to reply to him. In *Baptism,* he declares that our sins are forgiven, and calls us to repentance. That men may come forward, in a right manner, to be baptized, *confession of sins* is demanded from them: otherwise the whole performance would be nothing but an idle mockery[254] Let it be observed, that we are here speaking of adults, who ought not, we. are aware, to be admitted indiscriminately into the Church, or introduced by Baptism into the body of Christ,[255] till an examination has been previously made.[256]

Hence it is obvious, how absurdly this passage has been tortured by the Papists, to support auricular confession. There were no priests at hand, in whose ears each individual might privately mutter[257] his sins; nor is it said that they enumerated all their sins; nor are we told that John left in charge to his disciples an ordinary rule for confession. Even granting to Papists all that they ask, confession will belong to Catechumens alone,[258] and will have no place after Baptism. At all events, the law which they lay down for confession after Baptism, derives no countenance from John's example.[259]

254 "Autrement, tout ce sainct mystere seroit tournee en mines et bas-tellerie." — "Otherwise, all this holy mystery would be turned into grimaces and buffoonery."

255 "En la communion de Christ;" — "into communion *or* fellowship with Christ."

256 "Devant qu'ils n'ayent este examinez et interroguez de leur foy;" —"before they have been examined and interrogated as to their faith."

257 "Il n'y avoit point 1a de prestres, devant lequel un chacun eust peu s'a genouiller l'un apres l'autre, pourbarboter ses pechez en leurs aureilles." — "There were no priests there, before whom each individual might kneel down, one after another, to mutter his sins in their ears."

258 "Ceste confession n'appartient droit qu'a ceux qui de nouveau se convertissent a la foy." — "That confession would only belong to those who are recently converted to the faith."

259 "Pour le moins, quand ils commandent par leur loy de se confesser depuis le Baptesme, ils ne peuvent pas dire qu'ils ensuivent Jean, ny l'alleguer pour autheur." — "At least, when they enjoin, by their law, to make confession after Baptism, they cannot say that they follow John, nor produce him as their author."

MATTHEW 3:7-10; LUKE 3:7-14

Matthew 3:7-10	Luke 3:7-14
7. And when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, Offspring of vipers, who warned you that ye might flee from the wrath to come? **8**. Yield then fruits worthy of repentance. **9**. And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham for our fathers: for I say to you, that God is able to raise, from these stones, children to Abraham. **10**. And now also the axe is laid at the root of the trees: every tree, therefore, which yieldeth not good fruit, is cut down, and is thrown into the fire.	**7**. He said therefore to the multitudes, which went out, that they might be baptized by him, Offspring of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? **8**. Yield therefore fruits worthy of repentance. And begin to to say within yourselves, We have Abraham as our father: for I say to you, that God is able, from these stones, to raise up children to Abraham. **9**. And now also the axe is laid to the root of the trees: every tree, therefore, which yieldeth not good fruit, is cut down, and is thrown into the fire. **10**. And the multitudes asked him, saying, What then shall we do? **11**. And he answering saith to them, He who hath two coats, let him impart to him who hath none; and he who hath food, let him do in like manner.[260] **12**. And the publicans also came, that they might be baptized, and said to him, Master, what shall we do? **13**. And he said to them, Exact no more than what has been enjoined you. **14**. And the soldiers also asked him, saying, And what shall we do? He saith to them, Do violence to no man, accuse no man falsely, and be content with your wages.

Matthew 3:7. *And when he saw many of the Pharisees.* It is here related by Matthew and Luke, that John did not merely preach repentance in a general manner, but that he also applied his discourse to individuals. And the manner of teaching will, in point of fact, be very unprofitable, if instructors do not judiciously inquire what the season demands, and what belongs to individuals. Nothing can be more unequal, in this respect, than a constant equality.[261] For this reason John, we are told, addressed the Pharisees and Sadducees with

260 "Qui a a manger, face la semblable." — "He who hath to eat, let him do the like."

261 "Et n' y a rien plus inegal en cest endroit, que de vouloir garder tousjours une mesme egalite." — "And nothing is more unequal, in this respect, than to wish to maintain always one uniform equality.

greater severity: because he saw that their hypocrisy, and swelling pride, rendered them liable to be more severely censured than the common people. To comprehend more fully his design, we must understand, that none are more stupid than hypocrites, who deceive themselves and others by the outward mask of holiness. While God thunders, on all sides, against the whole world, they construct a refuge for themselves in their own deceitful fancy; for they are convinced that they have nothing to do with the judgment of God. Does any one suppose, that John acted improperly, in treating them with so much harshness at the first interview? I reply: They were not unknown to him,[262] and the knowledge he had of them was derived, not from acquaintance or experience, but, on the contrary, from a secret revelation of the Spirit. It was therefore necessary that he should not spare them, lest they might return home more inflated with pride. Is it again objected, that they ought not to have been terrified by such severity of reproof, because they made a profession, in baptism, that they would afterwards be different persons from what they had formerly been? The reply is still easy. Those whose habits of uttering falsehood to God, and of deceiving themselves, lead them to hold out hypocrisy and pretension, instead of the reality, ought to be urged, with greater sharpness than other men, to true repentance. There is an astonishing pertinacity, as I have said, in hypocrites; and, until they have been flayed by violence, they obstinately keep their skin.

As to the loud and open rebuke, which was administered to them in presence of all, it was for the sake of others; and that is the reason why Luke mentions, that it was addressed to *multitudes,* (Luke 3:7.) Though the persons whom John reproved were few in number, his design was to strike terror on all; as Paul enjoins us to regard it as the advantage of public rebukes, "that others also may fear," (1 Timothy 5:20.) He addresses directly the Pharisees and Sadducees, and at the same time, addresses, through them, a warning to all, not to hold out a hypocritical appearance of repentance, instead of a true affection of the heart. Besides, it was of great importance to the whole nation to know[263] what sort of people the Pharisees and Sadducees were, who had miserably corrupted the worship of God, wasted the church, and overturned the whole of religion; — in a word, who had extinguished the light of God by their corruptions, and infected every thing by their crimes.

It is probable, therefore, that John publicly attacked the Pharisees, for the benefit of the whole church of God, that they might no longer dazzle the eyes of simple men by empty show, or hold the body of the people under oppression by wicked tyranny. In this respect,

262 "Je res ond uil co oissoit bien quelles gens c'estoyent." — "I reply, that he knew well what sort of people they were."

263 "Davantage, tout le peuple avoit grand interest d'estre advertis quelles gens estoyent les Sadduciens et Pharisiens." — "Besides, all the people had a deep interest in being warned what sort of people the Sadducees and Pharisees were."

it was a remarkable display of his firmness, that those, who were highly esteemed by others, were not spared on account of their reputation, but sternly reduced, as they deserved, to their proper rank. And thus ought all godly instructors to be zealous, not to dread any power of man, but boldly strive to "cast down every high thing that exalteth itself" against Christ, (2 Corinthians 10:5.)

If John, the organ of the Holy Spirit, employed such severity of language in his opening address to those who voluntarily came to be baptized, and to make a public profession of the gospel; how ought we now to act towards the avowed enemies of Christ, who not only reject obstinately all that belongs to sound doctrine, but whose efforts to extinguish the name of Christ are violently maintained by fire and sword? Most certainly, if you compare the Pope, and his abominable clergy, with the Pharisees and Sadducees, the mildest possible way of dealing with them will be, to throw them all into one bundle. Those, whose ears are so delicate, that they cannot endure to have any bitter thing said against the Pope, must argue, not with us, but with the Spirit of God. Yet let godly teachers beware, lest, while they are influenced by holy zeal against the tyrants of the Church, they mingle with it the affections of the flesh. And as no vehemence, which is not regulated by the wisdom of the Spirit, can obtain the divine approbation, let them not only restrain their feelings, but surrender themselves to the Holy Spirit, and implore his guidance, that nothing may escape them through inadvertency.[264]

Offspring of vipers. He gives them this name, instead of simply calling them *vipers,* in order to expose the envenomed malice of the whole class: for he intended to condemn, not merely those few persons who were present, but the whole body, and to charge both sects with producing nothing but serpents. They had vehement disputes, no doubt, with each other: but all were agreed in despising God, in a wicked desire to rule, in hatred of sound doctrine, and in a disgusting mass of numerous crimes.

Who warned you? As he had suspicions of their repentance, he puts the question with doubt and wonder, if it be possible that they repent sincerely. In this way, he summons them to the inward tribunal of conscience, that they may thoroughly examine themselves, and, laying aside all flattery, may institute a severe investigation into their crimes. *Wrath* is put here, as in many other places, for the judgment of God: as when Paul says, "The law worketh wrath," (Romans 4:15,) and "Give place to wraths[265] ", (Romans 12:19.) He calls it the *wrath*

264 "Afin qu'il ne leur eschappe aucun mot inconsiderement, et a la volee;" — "that no word may escape them inconsiderately, and at random."

265 "Il fait mention du temps avenir, parce que les hypocrites, tandis que Dieu les espargne, desprisent hardiment toutes ses menaces, et ne se resveillent jamais, sinon qu'il frappe dessus a grands coups." — "He mentions the future, because hypocrites, so long as God spares them, despise boldly all his threatenings, and never awake, till he strikes them with heavy strokes."

to come, which hangs over their heads, that they may not indulge in their wonted carelessness. For, though the wrath of God overflows, and his chastisements strike, the whole world, hypocrites always entertain the hope that they will escape. *To flee from the wrath* of God, is here taken in a good sense, that is, to seek the means of appeasing God, that he may no longer be angry with us. For a good part of men, in order to escape the wrath of God, withdraw themselves from his guidance and authority. But all that the sinner gains *by fleeing* from God, is to provoke more and more the wrath of God against him.

Matthew 3:8; Luke 3:8. *Yield therefore fruits worthy of repentance.* He confirms what I have already said, that the repentance, which is attested by words, is of no value, unless it be proved by the conduct: for it is too important a matter to be estimated lightly, or at random. And so John affirms, that the solemn declaration, which they made, is not enough, but that, in process of time, their works will make it evident, whether or not they have seriously repented.[266] It ought to be observed, that *good works* (Titus 3:8) are here called fruits *of repentance:* for *repentance* is an inward matter, which has its seat in the heart and soul, but afterwards yields its fruits in a change of life.[267] But as the whole of this part of doctrine has been grievously corrupted by Popery, we must attend to this distinction, that *repentance* is an inward renewal of the man, which manifests itself in the outward life, as a tree produces its fruit.

Matthew 3:9. *And think not to say within yourselves.* **Luke 3:8.** *And begin not to say within yourselves.* As the import of both phrases is undoubtedly the same, it is easy to ascertain what John meant. Till hypocrites are hard pressed, they either sleep in their sins, or indulge in licentious mirth.[268] But when they are summoned to the tribunal of God, they eagerly seek for some subterfuge or concealment, or some covering to interpose between God and them. John's address to the Pharisees and Sadducees amounts to this: "Now that I have sharply upbraided you, do not, as persons of your stamp are wont to do endeavor to find a remedy in an empty and deceitful title."

He thus tears from them the wicked confidence, by which they had been bewitched. The covenant, which God had made with Abraham, was employed by them as a shield to defend a bad conscience: not that they rested their salvation on the person of one man, but that God had adopted all the posterity of Abraham. Meanwhile, they did not consider, that none are entitled to be regarded as belonging to "the seed of Abraham," (John 8:33,) but those who follow his faith, and that without faith the covenant of God has no influence

266 "Si leur repentance est vraye, et si c'est it bon escient qu'ils vienent k luy." — "If their repentance is true, and if it is in good earnest that they come to him."

267 "Par le changement et amendement de vie;" — "by the change and amendment of life."

268 "Ils s'endorment toujours en leurs vices, ou s'egayent comme chevaux eschappez." — "They sleep always in their sins, or indulge in merriment, like horses let loose."

whatever in procuring salvation. And even the little word, *in yourselves,* is not without meaning: for though they did not boast in words, that they were Abraham's children, yet they were inwardly delighted with this title, as hypocrites are not ashamed to practice grosser impositions on God than on men.

God is able. The Jews flattered themselves with nearly the same pretenses, as are now brought forward insolently by the Papists. "There must be some Church in the world; because it is the will of God that he be acknowledged, and his name invoked, in the world. But the Church can be nowhere else than among us, to whom God has entrusted his covenant."[269] This arrogance was chiefly displayed by the high priests, and by others who had any share of government or authority. The common people were treated by them as profane and "accursed," (John 7:49,) and they looked upon themselves as the holy first-fruits; just as, in our own day, mitred Bishops, Abbots, Canons, Monks, Sorbonnists, and every description of Priests, glorying in the proud title of Clergy, regard the Laity with contempt. This error, of relying too much on the promise of God, John exposes and refutes, by saying that, though God passes by them, he will not want a Church.

The meaning of the words, therefore, is: "God has made an everlasting covenant with Abraham and his seed. In one point you are mistaken. While you are worse than bastards,[270] you imagine that you are the only children of Abraham. But God will raise up elsewhere a new seed of Abraham, which does not now appear." He says in the dative case, *children To ABRAHAM*, (τῶ ᾽Αβραὰμ,) to inform us, that the promise of God will not fail, and that Abraham, who relied on it, was not deceived, though his seed be not found in you. Thus from the beginning of the world the Lord has been faithful to his servants, and has never failed to fulfill the promise which he made to them, that he would extend mercy to their children, though he rejected hypocrites. Some imagine, that John spoke of the calling of the Gentiles. This appears to me to be without foundation: but as proud men did not believe it to be possible that the Church should be removed to another place, he reminds them, that God has in his power ways of preserving his Church, which they did not think of, any more than they believed that he could create *children* out of *stones.*

Matthew 3:10; Luke 3:9. *And now also the axe.* After having stripped hypocrites of the covering of a vain confidence, John announces the approaching judgment of God. He had formerly said that, though they were rejected, God would not want a people: and he now adds, that God is just about to drive out unworthy persons from the Church, as barren *trees* are wont to be *cut down.* His statement amounts to this, that God has already displayed his power for purifying the Church. The grace of God is never manifested for the salvation of

269 "D'autant que le Seigneur nous a ordonnez gardiens de son alliance." — "Because the Lord has appointed us guardians of his covenant."

270 "Quum sitis plus quam degeneres." — "Combien qu' a la verite vous soyez pires que bastards."

the godly, till his judgment first appears for the destruction of the world: and for two reasons; because God then separates his own people from the reprobate, and because his wrath is kindled anew by the ingratitude of the world. So that we have no reason to wonder, if the preaching of the gospel and the coming of Christ laid *the axe* for *cutting down* barren trees, or if the same causes[271] daily advance the wrath of God against the wicked.

Luke 3:10 *And the multitudes asked him.* A true feeling of repentance produces in the mind of the poor sinner an eager desire to know what is the will or command of God. John's reply explains, in a few words, *the fruits worthy of repentance:* for the world is always desirous to acquit itself of its duty to God by performing ceremonies; and there is nothing to which we are more prone, than to offer to God pretended worship, whenever he calls us to repentance. But *what fruits* does the Baptist here recommend? The duties of charity, and of the second Table of the Law:[272] not that God disregards the outward profession of godliness, and of his worship; but that this is a surer mark of distinction, and less frequently leads to mistakes.[273] For hypocrites labor strenuously to prove themselves worshippers of God by the performance of ceremonies, — paying no regard, however, to true righteousness: for they are either cruel to their neighbors, or addicted to falsehood and dishonesty.

It was therefore necessary to subject them to a more homely examination,[274] if they are just in their dealings with men, if they relieve the poor, if they are generous to the wretched, if they give liberally what the Lord has bestowed upon them. This is the reason why our Lord pronounces "judgment, mercy, and faith," to be "*the weightier matters of the law*," (Matthew 23:23,) and Scripture everywhere recommends "justice and judgment." We must particularly observe, that the duties of charity are here mentioned, not because they are of higher value than the worship of God, but because they testify the piety of men,[275] so as to detect the hypocrisy of those who boast with the mouth what is far distant from the heart.

But it is asked, did John lay this injunction, in a literal sense, on all whom he was preparing to be Christ's disciples, that they should not have *two coats?* We must observe, first,

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271 "Ces deux choses mesme;" — "these very two things."

272 "Des ceuvres de charite comprises en la seconde Table de la Loy;" — "works of charity included in the second Table of the Law."

273 "Non pas que Dieu ne requiere aussi une profession externe de son service et de la crainte de son nom, mais pource que l'autre partie est la marque la plus certaine pour cognoians, et, laquelle vrals on est le moins abuse." — "Not that God does not require also an external profession of his service and of the fear of his name, but because the other part is the surest mark to know true penitents, and one in which there is less risk of deception."

274 "C'est a dire, ou ils ne peuvent pas si aisement tromper." — "That is to say, in which they cannot so easily deceive."

275 "De la crainte de Dieu qui est en l'homme;" — "of the fear of God which is in man."

that this is the figure of speech which is called a *Synecdoche,* for under one example it comprehends a general rule. Hence it follows, that we must draw from it a meaning, which corresponds to the law of charity, as it is laid down by God: and that law is, that each person should give out of his abundance to supply the wants of the poor. God does not extort a tax, to be paid "grudgingly or of necessity" by those who, but for that necessity, would have chosen not to pay it: "for the Lord loveth a" willing and "cheerful giver," (2 Corinthians 9:7.) I make this observation, because it is of great consequence for men to be convinced, that the portion of their wealth which they bestow in this manner is a sacrifice pleasing and of good savor to God, — that "with such sacrifices God is well pleased," (Hebrews 13:16.)

Those who lay it down as a law, that no man must have any property of his own, not only make consciences to tremble, but overwhelm them with despair. With fanatics of this sort, who obstinately adhere to the literal meaning, it is not necessary that we should spend much time in refutation. If we are not allowed to have *two coats,* the same rule will apply to dishes, to salt-cellars, to shirts, and, in short, to all the furniture of a house. But the context makes it evident, that nothing was farther from John's intention than to overthrow the order of a state. Hence we infer, that all that he enjoined on the rich was, that they should bestow on the poor, according to their own ability, what their necessity required.

"Consider to what extent the necessaries of life, which you enjoy abundantly, are wanted by your neighbors, that your abundance may be a supply for their want," (2 Corinthians 8:14.)

But the more liberty that God allows us, we ought to be the more careful not to allow ourselves undue liberty.[276] Let the necessity of our brethren affect us powerfully, and let the bounty of God, which is in our hands, stimulate us to acts of kindness and generosity.

Luke 3:12. *And the publicans*[277] *also came. The publicans* are not only exhorted, in general terms, to repent, but the duties peculiar to their calling are demanded: for we know that, besides the general rule of the law, each person ought to consider what is required by the nature of the employment to which he has been called. All Christians, without distinction, "are taught of God to love one another," (1 Thessalonians 4:9:) but then there follow particular duties, which a teacher, for example, is bound to perform towards the Church, — a magistrate or prince towards the people, and the people, on the other hand, towards the magistrate, — a husband towards his wife, and a wife towards her husband, — and finally, children and parents toward each other. The *Publicans,* viewed as a class, were covetous,

276 "Cependant, tant plus Dieu nous traite doucement, et nous donne de liberte, tant plus faut-il que nous prenions garde a ne nous flatter ou lascher par trop la bride." — "Yet the more gently God treats us, and the more liberty he gives us, so much the more ought we to take care not to flatter ourselves, or loose the bridle too much."

277 "Peagets;" — "tax-gatherers."

rapacious, and cruel, and often oppressed the people by unjust exactions. In consequence of this, the Baptist reproves them for those offenses, with which that class was, for the most part, chargeable, when he commands them not to go beyond moderation in exacting tribute. At the same time, we draw this inference, that it is quite as lawful for a Christian man to receive or levy taxes, as for a magistrate to impose them.

In the same way we must judge about war. John does not order the soldiers to throw away their arms, and to relinquish their oath; but he forbids them to pillage the wretched people under the pretense of their duty as soldiers, to bring false accusations against the innocent, and to be guilty of extortions, — all of which crimes the greater part of them were accustomed to practice. These words obviously contain an approbation of civil government. It is a piece of idle sophistry to say, that John's hearers were ignorant people, and that he gave them nothing more than elementary instructions, which fell very far short of Christian perfection. John's office was, *to make ready a people prepared for the Lord,* (Luke 1:17) and there is no doubt that it was entirely and faithfully performed. Those men are guilty of calumny and sacrilege, who slander the Gospel, by declaring it to be opposed to human governments;[278] as if Christ destroyed what his heavenly Father sanctioned. But, without the sword, laws are dead, and legal judgments have no force or authority. Magistrates require not only an executioner,[279] but other attendants, among whom are the military,[280] without whose assistance and agency it is impossible to maintain peace. Still, the object must be considered. Princes must not allow themselves to sport with human blood, nor must soldiers give themselves up to cruelty, from a desire of gain, as if slaughter were their chief business: but both must be drawn to it by necessity, and by a regard to public advantage.

278 "Qui veulent faire accroire qu'elle n'a rouve point les principautes, empires et gouvernements qui sont entre les hornroes; — "who wish to make it believed that it does not approve of the principalities, empires, and governments, which exist among men."

279 "Un bourreau;" — "a hangman."

280 "Les gendarmes."

MATTHEW 3:11-12; MARK 1:7-8; LUKE 3:15-18

Matthew 3:11-12	Mark 1:7-8	Luke 3:15-18
11. I indeed baptize you with water to repentance: but he who cometh after me is stronger than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to carry: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. **12**. Whose winnowing-fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his thrashing-floor, and will collect the wheat into his barn: but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.	**7**. And he preached, saying, One cometh after me, that latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. **8**. I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.	**15**. And while the people were waiting, and while all were thinking in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ: **16**. John answered to all, saying, I indeed baptize you with water, but there cometh one stronger than I, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to loose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. **17**. Whose winnowing-fan is in his hand, and he will cleanse his thrashing-floor, and will collect the wheat into his barn: but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. **18**. And exhorting also as to many other things, he preached the Gospel [281] to the people.

The three Evangelists relate the Baptist's discourse in the same words. In one respect, Luke's account is more full: for he opens it by explaining the occasion on which this discourse was delivered. It arose from the people being in danger of being led, by a false opinion, to convey to him the honor which was due to Christ. To remove, as soon as possible, every occasion of such a mistake, he expressly declares, that he is not the Christ, and draws such a distinction between Christ and himself as to maintain Christ's prerogative. He would have done this of his own accord, by *handing them over, to* use a common expression, as disciples to Christ: but he takes up the matter at an earlier stage, lest, by remaining silent any longer, he should confirm the people in an error.

281 "Evangelizabat."

He who cometh after me is stronger than I Christ is thus declared to be so far superior in power and rank, that, with respect to him, John must occupy a private station.[282] He uses ordinary forms of speech to magnify the glory of Christ, in comparison of whom he declares that he himself is nothing. The chief part of his statement is, that he represents Christ as the author of spiritual baptism, and himself as only the minister of outward baptism. He appears to anticipate an objection, which might be brought forward. What was the design of the Baptism which he had taken upon himself? For it was no light matter to introduce any innovation whatever into the Church of God, and particularly to bring forward a new way of introducing persons into the Church, which was more perfect than the law of God. He replies, that he did not proceed to do this without authority; but that his office, as minister of an outward symbol, takes nothing away from the power and glory of Christ.

Hence we infer, that his intention was not at all to distinguish between his own baptism, and that which Christ taught his disciples, and which he intended should remain in perpetual obligation in his Church. He does not contrast one visible sign with another visible sign, but compares the characters of master and servant with each other, and shows what is due to the master, and what is due to the servant. It ought not to have any weight with us, that an opinion has long and extensively prevailed, that John's baptism differs from ours. We must learn to form our judgment from the matter as it stands, and not from the mistaken opinions of men. And certainly the comparison, which they imagine to have been made, would involve great absurdities. It would follow from it, that the Holy Spirit is given, in the present day, by ministers. Again, it would follow that John's baptism was a dead sign, and had no efficacy whatever. Thirdly, it would follow, that we have not the same baptism with Christ: for it is sufficiently evident, that the fellowship, which he condescends to maintain with us, was ratified by this pledge,[283] when he consecrated baptism in his own body.

We must therefore hold by what I have already said, that John merely distinguishes, in this passage, between himself and the other ministers of baptism, on the one hand, and the power of Christ, on the other, and maintains the superiority of the master over the servants. And hence we deduce the general doctrine, as to what is done in baptism by men, and what is accomplished in it by the Son of God. To men has been committed nothing more than the administration of an outward and visible sign: the reality dwells with Christ alone.[284]

Scripture does sometimes, though not in a literal sense,[285] ascribe to men what John here declares not to belong to men, but claims exclusively for Christ. In such cases, however,

282 "In ordinem cogendus sit." — "Il faut qu'il baissc la teste." — "He must bow the head."

283 "A este confirme et ratifie par ce signe;" — "was confirmed and ratified by this sign."

284 "La verite du Baptesme vient et procede du Christ seul." — "The truth of Baptism comes and proceeds from Christ alone."

285 "Improprie."

the design is not to inquire, what man has separately and by himself, but merely to show, what is the effect and advantage of signs, and in what manner God makes use of them, as instruments, by his Spirit. Here also is laid down a distinction between Christ and his ministers, that the world may not fall into the mistake, of giving to them what is justly due to him alone: for there is nothing to which they are more prone, than to adorn creatures with what has been taken from God by robbery. A careful attention to this observation will rid us of many difficulties. We know what disputes have arisen, in our own age, about the advantage and efficacy of signs, all of which may be disposed of in a single word. The ordinance of our Lord, viewed as a whole, includes himself as its Author, and the power of the Spirit, together with the figure and the minister: but where a comparison is made between our Lord and the minister, the former must have all the honor, and the latter must be reduced to nothing.

Matthew 3:11. *He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire* It is asked, why did not John equally say, that it is Christ alone who washes souls with his blood? The reason is, that this very washing is performed by the power of the Spirit, and John reckoned it enough to express the whole effect of baptism by the single word *Spirit* The meaning is clear, that Christ alone bestows all the grace which is figuratively represented by outward baptism, because it is he who "sprinkles the conscience" with his blood. It is he also who mortifies the old man, and bestows the Spirit of regeneration. The word *fire* is added as an epithet, and is applied to the Spirit, because he takes away our pollutions, *as fire* purifies gold. In the same manner, he is metaphorically called *water* in another passage, (John 3:5.)

12. *Whose winnowing-fan is in his hand* In the former verse, John preached concerning the grace of Christ, that the Jews might yield themselves to him to be renewed: now he discourses of judgment, that he may strike despisers with terror. As there are always many hypocrites who proudly reject the grace of Christ offered to them, it is also necessary to denounce the judgment that awaits them. For this reason John here describes Christ as a severe judge against unbelievers. And this is an order which must be observed by us in teaching, that hypocrites may know, that their rejection of Christ will not go unpunished. They will thus be roused from their lethargy, and begin to dread him as an avenger, whom they despised as the author of salvation.

I have no doubt, that John intended also to show, what Christ accomplishes by means of his Gospel. The preaching of the Gospel, then, is the *winnowing-fan* Before the Lord *sifts* us, the whole world is involved in confusion, every one flatters himself, and the good are mixed with the bad in short, it is only necessary that the *chaff* be blown. But when Christ comes forward with his Gospels, — when he reproves the consciences and summons them to the tribunal of God, the *chaff* is sifted out,[286] which formerly occupied a great part of the

286 "Les pailles s'en vont avec le vent;" — "the chaff goes away with the wind."

thrashing-floor It is true that, in the case of individuals, the Gospel effects a separation from the *chaff:* but in this passage, John compares the reprobate to *chaff,* and believers to *wheat* The *thrashing floor* accordingly denotes — not the world, (as some people imagine,) but the Church: for we must attend to the class of persons whom John addresses. The mere title filled the Jews with pride,[287] but John tells them that it is foolish in them to be proud of it, because they hold but a temporary place in the Church of God, from which they are soon to be thrown out, like *chaff* from the *thrashing-floor*. In this way, he gives a rapid glance at the corrupt state in which the Church then was: for it was covered with husks, and straws, and other rubbish, but would soon be cleansed by the strong breeze of the Gospel. But how is Christ said to separate the *chaff* from the *wheat,* when he can find nothing in men but mere *chaff*? The answer is easy. The elect are formed into *wheat,*[288] and are then separated from the *chaff,* and *collected into the granary*

He will thoroughly cleanse his thrashing-floor This work was begun by Christ, and is daily going forward: but the full accomplishment of it will not be seen till the last day. This is the reason why John draws our attention to the subject. But let us remember, that believers even now enter, by hope, into the *granary* of God, in which they will actually have their everlasting abode; while the reprobate experience, in their convictions of guilt, the heat of that *fire,* the actual *burning* of which they will feel at the last day.

Many persons, I am aware, have entered into ingenious debates about the eternal *fire,* by which the wicked will be tormented after the judgment. But we may conclude from many passages of Scripture, that it is a metaphorical expression. For, if we must believe that it is real, or what they call material *fire,* we must also believe that the *brimstone* and the *fan* are material, both of them being mentioned by Isaiah.

> "For Tophet is ordained of old; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it," (Isaiah 30:33.)

We must explain the fire in the same manner as the *worm,* (Mark 9:44, 46, 48.) and if it is universally agreed that the *worm* is a metaphorical term, we must form the same opinion as to the fire. Let us lay aside the speculations, by which foolish men weary themselves to no purpose, and satisfy ourselves with believing, that these forms of speech denote, in a manner suited to our feeble capacity, a dreadful torment, which no man can now comprehend, and no language can express.

287 "Les Juifs s'arrestoyent a ce beau titre de Peuple de Dieu, et d'En-fans d'Abraham, et s'en enfioyent." — "The Jews dwelt upon this fine title of People of God, and Children of Abraham, and were proud of it."

288 "Les esleus, qui de leur nature ne sont que *paille,* deviennent *froment* par la grace de Dieu." — "The elect, who by their nature are only *chaff;* become *wheat* by the grace of God."

MATTHEW 3:13-17; MARK 1:9-11; LUKE 3:21-23

Matthew 3:13-17	Mark 1:9-11	Luke 3:21-23
13. Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan to John, that he might be baptized by him. **14**. But John forbade [289] him, saying, I have need to be baptized by thee, and dost thou come to me? **15**. And Jesus answering said to him, Suffer it now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffers him. **16**. And Jesus, having been baptized, went up immediately from the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon him. **17**. And, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my be loved Son, in whom I am well pleased.	**9**. And it happened in those days, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in Jordan. **10**. And immediately, when he was going up out of the water, he saw the heavens cleft assunder, and the Spirit descending as a dove, upon him. **11**. And a voice came from heaven, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.	**21**. And it happened, that, while all the people were being baptized, [290] when Jesus had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, **22**. And that the Holy Spirit descended in a bodily appearance, [291] as a dove, upon him, and a voice came from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son: in thee I am well pleased. **23**. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age.

Matthew 3:13. *That he might be baptized by him.* For what purpose did the Son of God wish to be baptized? This may be learned, in some measure, from his answer. We have already assigned a special reason. He received the same baptism with us, in order to assure believers, that they are ingrafted into his body, and that they are "buried with him in baptism," that they may rise to "newness of life," (Romans 6:4.) But the end, which he here proposes, is more *extensive: for thus it became him to fulfill all righteousness,* (verse 15.) The word *righteousness* frequently signifies, in Scripture, the observation of the law: and in that sense we may explain this passage to mean that, since Christ had voluntarily subjected himself to the law, it was necessary that he should keep it in every part. But I prefer a more simple in-

290 "Quum baptizaretur omnis populus;" — "en baptizant tout le peuple;" — "in baptizing all the people."

289 "Empeschoit fort;" — "strongly opposed him."

291 "En apparence corporelle, *ou, forme*;" — "in bodily appearance, *or, shape.*"

terpretation. "Say nothing for the present," said our Lord, "about my rank:[292] for the question before us is not, which of us deserves to be placed above the other.[293] Let us rather consider what our calling demands, and what has been enjoined on us by God the Father." The general reason why Christ received baptism was, that he might render full obedience to the Father; and the special reason was, that he might consecrate baptism in his own body, that we might have it in common with him.

14. *I have need to be baptized by thee.* It is certain, that John acknowledged Christ to be not only a distinguished prophet, as many foolishly dream, but the Son of God, as he really was: for otherwise he would have dishonored God by lowering his holy calling to a mortal man. How he came to know this, the reader will learn by consulting John's Gospel, (1:15,33.) There was, no doubt, plausibility in this ground of refusal, that Christ had no need of his baptism: but John was mistaken in not considering, that it was for the sake of others that baptism was asked.[294] And so Christ bids him consider, what was suitable to the character of a *servant*, (Philippians 2:7,) which he had undertaken; for a voluntary subjection takes nothing from his glory. Though the good man[295] remained ignorant, for a time, of some part of his public duty, this particular error did not prevent him from discharging, in a proper and lawful manner, his office of Baptist. This example shows, that we do not act rashly, in undertaking the commission which the Lord has given us, according to the light we enjoy, though we do not immediately comprehend all that belongs to our calling, or that depends upon it. We must also observe his modesty, in giving up his opinion, and immediately obeying Christ.

16. *And, lo, the heavens were opened to him. The opening of the heavens* sometimes means a manifestation of heavenly glory; but here it means also a *cleft, or opening,* of the visible heaven, so that John could see something beyond the planets and stars. The words of Mark can have no other meaning, *he saw the heavens cleft asunder*[296] An exact inquiry into the way in which this opening was made, would be of no importance, nor is it necessary. It is sufficient for us to believe, that it was a symbol of the Divine presence. As the Evangelists say that John saw the Holy Spirit, it is probable that the *opening of the heavens* was chiefly on his account. Yet I do not hesitate to admit that Christ also, so far as he was man, received from it additional certainty as to his heavenly calling. This appears to be the tendency of the words of Luke: *while Jesus was praying, the heaven was opened*, (Luke 3:21:) for, though

292 "Je laisse maintenant ma dignite a part." — "I now lay my rank aside."

293 "Lequel de nous deux est plus grand ou excellent;" — "which of usboth is greater or more excellent."

294 "Que c'est pour le profit des autres, et non pas pour le sien, que Christ demande d'estre baptize." — "That it is for the benefit of others, and not for his own, that Christ asks to be baptized."

295 "Quelque excellent personnage qu'il fust." — "However excellent a person he was."

296 *"Il vid les cieux mi-partir,* ou se fendre." — "*He saw the heavens divided in the middle,* or deft."

his prayers were always directed towards the benefit of others, yet as man, when he commenced a warfare of so arduous a description, he needed to be armed with a remarkable power of the Spirit.

But here two questions arise. The *first* is, why did the Spirit, who had *formerly* dwelt in Christ, descend upon *him at that time?* This question is answered by a passage of the prophet Isaiah, which will be handled in another place.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord God hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted," (Isaiah 61:1.)

Though the grace of the Spirit was bestowed on Christ in a remarkable and extraordinary manner, (John 3:34,) yet he remained at home as a private person, till he should be called to public life by the Father. Now that the full time is come, for preparing to discharge the office of Redeemer, he is clothed with a new power of the Spirit, and that not so much for his own sake, as for the sake of others. It was done on purpose, that believers might learn to receive, and to contemplate with reverence, his divine power, and that the weakness of the flesh might not make him despised.

This was also the reason why he delayed his baptism till *the thirtieth year of his age,* (Luke 3:23.) Baptism was an appendage to the Gospel: and therefore it began at the same time with the preaching of the Gospel. When Christ was preparing to preach the Gospel, he was introduced by Baptism into his office; and at the same time was endued with the Holy Spirit. When John beholds the Holy Spirit descending upon Christ, it is to remind him, that nothing carnal or earthly must be expected in Christ, but that he comes as a godlike man,[297] descended from heaven, in whom the power of the Holy Spirit reigns. We know, indeed, that he is *God manifested in the flesh,* (1 Timothy 3:16:) but even in his character as a servant, and in his human nature, there is a heavenly power to be considered.

The *second* question is, why did the Holy Spirit appear in the shape of a *dove,* rather than in that of *fire*? The answer depends on the analogy, or resemblance between the figure and the thing represented. We know what the prophet Isaiah ascribes to Christ.

> "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench," (Isaiah 42:2, 3.)

On account of this mildness of Christ, by which he kindly and gently called, and every day invites, sinners to the hope of salvation, *the Holy Spirit descended upon him in the appearance of a dove* And in this symbol has been held out to us an eminent token of the sweetest consolation, that we may not fear to approach to Christ, who meets us, not in the formidable power of the Spirit, but clothed with gentle and lovely grace.

He saw the Spirit of God That is, John *saw:* for it immediately follows, that *the Spirit descended on Christ* There now arises a *third* question, how could John see the Holy Spirit?

297 "Un homme rempli de Dieu;" — "a man filled with God."

I reply: As the Spirit of God is everywhere present, and fills heaven and earth, he is not said, in a literal sense, to *descend,* and the same observation may be made as to his *appearance.* Though he is in himself invisible, yet he is spoken of as *beheld,* when he exhibits any visible sign of his presence. John did not see the essence of the Spirit, which cannot be discerned by the senses of men;[298] nor did he see his power, which is not beheld by human senses, but only by the understanding of faith: but he saw *the appearance of a dove,* under which God showed the presence of his Spirit. It is a figure of speech,[299] by which the sign is put for the thing signified, the name of a spiritual object being applied to the visible sign.

While it is foolish and improper to press, as some do, the literal meaning, so as to include both the sign and the thing signified, we must observe, that the connection subsisting between the sign and the thing signified is denoted by these modes of expression. In this sense, the bread of the Lord's Supper is called *the body of Christ,* (1 Corinthians 10:16:) not because it is so, but because it assures us, that the body of Christ is truly given to us for food. Meanwhile, let us bear in mind what I have just mentioned, that we must not imagine a descent of the thing signified, so as to seek it in the sign, as if it had a bodily place there, but ought to be abundantly satisfied with the assurance, that God grants, by his secret power, all that he holds out to us by figures.

Another question more curious than useful has been put. Was this *dove* a solid body, or the appearance of one? Though the words of Luke seem to intimate that it was not the substance of a body, but only *a bodily appearance;* yet, lest I should afford to any man an occasion of wrangling, I leave the matter unsettled.

17. And, *lo, a voice from heaven* From that *opening of the heavens,* which has been already mentioned, a loud voice was heard, that its majesty might be more impressive. The public appearance of Christ, to undertake the office of Mediator, was accompanied by this announcement,[300] in which he was offered to us by the Father, that we may rely on this pledge of our adoption, and boldly call God himself our Father. The designation of *Son* belongs truly and naturally to Christ alone: but yet he was declared to be the Son of God in our flesh, that the favor of Him, whom he alone has a right to call *Father,* may be also obtained for us. And thus when God presents Christ to us as Mediator, accompanied by the title of *Son,* he declares that he is the *Father of us all,* (Ephesians 4:6.)

298 "A parler proprement, il ne descend point, et semblablement ne peut estre veu." — "Strictly speaking, he does not descend, and in like manner he cannot be seen."

299 "C'est une maniere de parler par Metonymie, (ainsi que parlent les gens de lettres.")—"It is a way of speaking by Metonymy, (as learned people talk.")

300 "Avec ce tesmoignage et recommandation;" — "with this testimony and recommendation."

Such, too, is the import of the epithet *beloved:* for in ourselves we are hateful to God, and his fatherly love must flow to us by Christ. The best expounder of this passage is the Apostle Paul, when he says

"who hath predestinated us into adoption by Jesus Christ in himself, according to the good pleasure of his will; to the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath accepted us in the Beloved,"

(Ephesians 1:5,6)

that is, in his beloved Son. It is still more fully expressed by these words, in *whom I am well pleased* They imply, that the love of God rests on Christ in such a manner, as to diffuse itself from him to us all; and not to us only, but even to the angels themselves. Not that they need reconciliation, for they never were at enmity with God: but even they become perfectly united to God, only by means of their *Head,* (Ephesians 1:22.) For the same reason, he is also called "the first-born of every creature," (Colossians 1:5;) and Paul likewise states that Christ came

"to reconcile all things to himself, both those which are on earth, and those which are in heavens," (Colossians 1:20.)

MATTHEW 4:1-4; MARK 1:12-13; LUKE 4:1-4

Matthew 4:1-4	Mark 1:12-13	Luke 4:1-4
1. Then Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit, that he might be tempted by the devil; **2**. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he at length was hungry. **3**. And when he who tempteth had approached to him, he said, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones may become loaves. [301] **4**. But he answering said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God.	**12**. And immediately the Spirit drove him into the wilderness, **13**. And he was in the wilderness forty days and forty nights; and was tempted by Satan, and was with the wild beasts. [302]	**1**. And Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost, returnined from Jordan, and was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness. **2**. Forty days he was tempted by the devil; and he ate nothing in those days, afterwards he was hungry. [303] **3**. And the devil said to him, If thou art the Son of God, command this stone that it may become bread. **4**. And Jesus replied to him, saying, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

Matthew 4:1. *Then Jesus was led.* There were two reasons why Christ withdrew into the wilderness. The first was, that, after a fast of forty days, he might come forth as a new man, or rather a heavenly man, to the discharge of his office. The next was, that he might be tried by temptation and undergo an apprenticeship, before he undertook an office so arduous, and so elevated. Let us therefore learn that, by the guidance of the Spirit, Christ withdrew from the crowd of men, in order that he might come forth as the highest teacher of the church, as the ambassador of God, — rather as sent from heaven, than as taken from some town, and from among the common people.

In the same way Moses, when God was about to employ him as his agent in publishing his law, was carried into Mount Sinai, withdrawn from the view of the people, and admitted, as it were, into a heavenly sanctuary, (Exodus 24:12.) It was proper that Christ should be surrounded by marks of divine grace and power — at least equally illustrious with those which were bestowed on Moses, that the majesty of the Gospel might not be inferior to that of the Law. If God bestowed singular honor on a doctrine which was "the ministration of

302 "Et estoit avec les bestes sauvages."

303 "Mais apres qu'ils furent passez, il ent faim;" — "but after that they were past, he was hungry."

301 "Ut lapides hi panes fiant;" — "Que ces pierres devienent pains."

death," (2 Corinthians 3:7,) how much more honor is due to the doctrine of life? And if a shadowy portrait of God had so much brightness, ought not his face, which appears in the Gospel, to shine with full splendor?

Such also was the design of the *fasting:* for Christ abstained from eating and drinking, not to give an example of temperance, but to acquire greater authority, by being separated from the ordinary condition of men, and coming forth, as an angel from heaven, not as a man from the earth. For what, pray, would have been that virtue of abstinence, in not tasting food, for which he had no more appetite than if he had not been clothed with flesh?[304] It is mere folly, therefore, to appoint a forty days' fast, (as it is called,) in imitation of Christ. There is no more reason why we should follow the example of Christ in this matter, than there formerly was for the holy Prophets, and other Fathers under the law, to imitate the fast of Moses. But we are aware, that none of them thought of doing so; with the single exception of Elijah, who was employed by God in restoring the law, and who, for nearly the same reason with Moses, was kept in the mount fasting.

Those who fast daily, during all the forty days, pretend that they are imitators of Christ. But how? They stuff their belly so completely at dinner, that, when the hour of supper arrives, they have no difficulty in abstaining from food. What resemblance do they bear to the Son of God? The ancients practiced greater moderation: but even they had nothing that approached to Christ's *fasting,* any more, in fact, than the abstinence of men approaches to the condition of angels, who do not eat at all. Besides, neither Christ nor Moses observed a solemn fast every year; but both of them observed it only once during their whole life. I wish we could say that they had only amused themselves, like apes, by such fooleries. It was a wicked and abominable mockery of Christ, to attempt, by this contrivance of fasting, to conform themselves to him as their model.[305] To believe that such fasting is a meritorious work, and that it is a part of godliness and of the worship of God, is a very base superstition.

But above all, it is an intolerable outrage on God, whose extraordinary miracle they throw into the shade; secondly, on Christ, whose distinctive badge they steal from him, that they may clothe themselves with his spoils; thirdly, on the Gospel, which loses not a little

304 "Car, je vous prie, quelle virtu d' abstinence y-eust-il eue a, ne taster point de viande, veu qu'il n'avoit nulle faim qui le pressast? Car il est certain, et les Evangelistes le donnent a entendre assez clairement, qu'il s'est passe de manger tout ainsi que s'il n'eust point este revestu de notre chair." — "For what virtue of abstinence, pray, was there in not tasting food, since he had no hunger that pressed him? For it is certain, and the Evangelists give us plainly enough to understand, that he had left off eating as completely as if he had not been clothed with our flesh."

305 "En ce qu'ils se sont essayez par leur jeusne, forge a leur fantasie, de se mettre du rang de Christ, et se mesurer a luy." — "In having attempted, by their fast, forged according to their fancy, to place themselves in the same rank with Christ, and to vie with him."

of its authority, if this *fasting* of Christ is not acknowledged to be his seal. God exhibited a singular miracle, when he relieved his Son from the necessity of eating and when they attempt the same thing by their own power, what is it but a mad and daring ambition to be equal with God? Christ's *fasting* was a distinctive badge of the divine glory: and is it not to defraud him of his glory, and to reduce him to the ordinary rank of men, when mortals freely mix themselves with him as his companions? God appointed Christ's fasting to seal the Gospel: and do those who apply it to a different purpose abate nothing from the dignity of the Gospel? Away, then, with that ridiculous imitation,[306] which overturns the purpose of God, and the whole order of his works. Let it be observed, that I do not speak of *fastings* in general, the practice of which I could wish were more general among us, provided it were pure.

But I must explain what was the object of Christ's *fasting.* Satan availed himself of our Lord's hunger as an occasion for tempting him, as will shortly be more fully stated. For the present, we must inquire generally, why was it the will of God that his Son should be tempted? That he was brought into this contest by a fixed purpose of God, is evident from the words of *Matthew* and *Mark,* who say, that for this reason *he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.* God intended, I have no doubt, to exhibit in the person of his Son, as in a very bright mirror, how obstinately and perseveringly Satan opposes the salvation of men. For how comes it, that he attacks Christ more furiously, and directs all his power and forces against him, at the particular time mentioned by the Evangelists, but because he sees him preparing, at the command of the Father, to undertake the redemption of men? Our salvation, therefore, was attacked in the person of Christ, just as the ministers, whom Christ has authorized to proclaim his redemption, are the objects of Satan's daily warfare.

It ought to be observed, at the same time, that the Son of God voluntarily endured the temptations, which we are now considering, and fought, as it were, in single combat with the devil, that, by his victory, he might obtain a triumph for us. Whenever we are called to encounter Satan, let us remember, that his attacks can, in no other way, be sustained and repelled, than by holding out this shield: for the Son of God undoubtedly allowed himself to be tempted, that he may be constantly before our minds, when Satan excites within us any contest of temptations. When he was leading a private life at home, we do not read that he was tempted; but when he was about to discharge the office of Redeemer, he then entered the field in the name of his whole church. But if Christ was tempted as the public representative of all believers, let us learn, that the temptations which befall us are not accidental, or regulated by the will of Satan, without God's permission; but that the Spirit of God presides over our contests as an exercise of our faith. This will aid us in cherishing the assured hope,

306 "χαχοζηλία." — "Ceste singerie et imitation contrefaite;" — "that apishness and counterfeit imitation."

that God, who is the supreme judge and disposer of the combat,[307] will not be unmindful of us, but will fortify us against those distresses, which he sees that we are unable to meet.

There is a slight apparent difference in the words of Luke, that *Jesus, full of the Holy Ghost, withdrew from Jordan* They imply, that he was then more abundantly endued with the grace and power of the Spirit, in order that he might be more fortified for the battles which he had to fight: for it was not without a good reason that *the Holy Spirit descended upon him* in a visible shape. It has been already stated, that the grace of God shone in him the more brightly, as the necessity arising out of our salvation became greater.[308] But, at first sight, it appears strange, that Christ was liable to the temptations of the devil: for, when temptation falls on men, it must always be owing to sin and weakness. I reply: First, Christ took upon him *our infirmity, but without sin,* (Hebrews 4:15.) Secondly, it detracts no more from his glory, that he was exposed to temptations, than that he was clothed with our flesh: for he was made man on the condition that, along with our flesh, he should take upon him our feelings. But the whole difficulty lies in the first point. How was Christ surrounded by our weakness, so as to be capable of being tempted by Satan, and yet to be pure and free

307 "Agonotheta." This word, slightly altered from the Greek word ἀγωνοθέτης, signifiesthe judge who presided at the public games." The Epistles of Paul contain many allusions to the Olympic games, — sometimes so rapid and indirect, that they are apt to be lost in a translation, and at other times swelling into an extended picture, which arrests and captivates every reader. Those who are familiar with his writings, and who have occasion to treat of the same class of subjects, will naturally employ the same kind of illustrations, in conveying to the minds of others those conceptions, for which they have been indebted to this great master. While they describe the contests of the people of God with outward foes, or their more violent struggles with *the old man* within, they will frequently, and sometimes unconsciously, fall into similar allusions. — *Ed.*

308 Here the French copy gives an additional illustration, of which no trace is found in the Latin original. "Le mesme S. Luc avec S. Marc enseigne que le commencement des tentations estoit de plus loin. Car Satan avoit assailli Christ quarante jours au paravant qu'il eust faim: mais les principaux et plus excellens combats sont icy recitez, afin que nous sachions que Satan veincu en plusieurs assaux, s'est finalement rue furieusement, et de toute sa force, pour voir s'il pourroit d'aventure veincre finalement celuy duquel il n'avoit peu venir a bout. Car d'autant plus qu'on est exere aux combats spirituels, Dieu permet aussi qu'on soit plus rudement assailli. Parquoy apprenons a ne nous lasser jamais, jusqu'a ce qu' ayans paracheve tout le cours de notre guerre, nous soyons parvenus au but." — "The same St Luke, as well as St Mark, informs us, that the commencement of the temptations was more distant. For Satan had attacked Christ forty days before he was hungry: but the most important and valuable combats are here related, in order that we may know that Satan, vanquished in many assaults, had fallen upon him furiously, and with all his might, to see if perhaps he might finally vanquish him, with whom he had not been able to succeed. For the more that we are exercised in spiritual combats, God allows us to be the more violently attacked. Wherefore let us learn, never to become weary, till, having finished the whole course of our war, we have reached the end."

from all sin? The solution will not be difficult, if we recollect, that the nature of Adam, while it was still innocent, and reflected the brightness of the divine image, — was liable to temptations. All the bodily affections, that exist in man, are so many opportunities which Satan seizes to tempt him.

It is justly reckoned a weakness of human nature, that our senses are affected by external objects. But this weakness would not be sinful, were it not for the presence of corruption; in consequence of which Satan never attacks us, without doing some injury, or, at least, without inflicting a slight wound. Christ was separated from us, in this respect, by the perfection of his nature; though we must not imagine him to have existed in that intermediate condition, which belonged to Adam, to whom it was only granted, that it was possible for him not to sin. We know, that Christ was fortified by the Spirit with such power, that the darts of Satan could not pierce him.[309]

Matthew 4:3. *And when he, who tempteth, had approached to him.* This name, ὁ πειράζων, *the tempter,* is given to Satan by the Spirit for the express purpose, that believers may be more carefully on their guard against him. Hence, too, we conclude, that temptations, which solicit us to what is evil, come from him alone: for, when God is sometimes said to *tempt* or *prove,* (Genesis 22:1; Deuteronomy 13:3,) it is for a different purpose, namely, to try their faith, or to inflict punishment on unbelievers, or to discover the hypocrisy of those who do not sincerely obey the truth.

That these stones may become loaves. Here the ancients amused themselves with ingenious trifles. The first temptation, they said, was to gluttony; the second, to ambition; and the third, to covetousness. But it is absurd to suppose that it arises from the intemperance of gluttony,[310] when a hungry person desires food to satisfy nature. What luxury will they fancy themselves to have discovered in the use of bread, that one who satisfies himself, as we say, with dry bread, must be reckoned an epicure? But not to waste more words on that point, Christ's answer alone is sufficient to show, that the design of Satan was altogether different. The Son of God was not such an unskillful or inexperienced antagonist, as not to know how he might ward off the strokes of his adversary, or idly to present his shield on the left hand when he was attacked on the right. If Satan had endeavored to allure him by the enticements of gluttony,[311] he had at hand passages of Scripture fitted to repel him. But he proposes nothing of this sort.

309 "Car nous savons que Christ a este muni d'une telle vertu de l'Esprit, que les dards de Satan ne le pouvoyent navrer ne blesser: c'est a dire, qcu'il estoit impossible que peche tombast en luy." — "For we know that Christ was fortified by such a power of the Spirit, that the darts of Satan could not pierce or wound him: that *is,* that it was impossible for sin to fall upon him."

310 "Friandise ou gourmandise;" — "epicurism or gormandizing."

311 "A friandise, ou a quelque excez de la bouche." — "To epicurism, or any excess of the palate."

4. *Man shall not live by bread alone.* He quotes the statement, that men *do not live by bread alone,* but by the secret blessing of God. Hence we conclude, that Satan made a direct attack on the faith of Christ, in the hope that, after destroying his faith, he would drive Christ to unlawful and wicked methods of procuring food. And certainly he presses us very hard, when he attempts to make us distrust God, and consult our own advantage in a way not authorized by his word. The meaning of the words, therefore, is: "When you see that you are forsaken by God, you are driven by necessity to attend to yourself. Provide then for yourself the food, with which God does not supply you." Now, though[312] he holds out the divine power of Christ to turn the *stones* into *loaves,* yet the single object which he has in view, is to persuade Christ to depart from the word of God, and to follow the dictates of infidelity.

Christ's reply, therefore, is appropriate: "*Man shall not live by bread alone.* You advise me to contrive some remedy, for obtaining relief in a different manner from what God permits. This would be to distrust God; and I have no reason to expect that he will support me in a different manner from what he has promised in his word. You, Satan, represent his favor as confined to *bread:* but Himself declares, that, though every kind of food were wanting, his blessing alone is sufficient for our nourishment." Such was the kind of temptation which Satan employed, the same kind with which he assails us daily. The Son of God did not choose to undertake any contest of an unusual description, but to sustain assaults in common with us, that we might be furnished with the same armor, and might entertain no doubt as to achieving the victory.

It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone. The first thing to be observed here is, that Christ uses Scripture as his shield: for this is the true way of fighting, if we wish to make ourselves sure of the victory. With good reason does Paul say, that, the sword of the Spirit is the word of God," and enjoin us to "take the shield of faiths" (Ephesians 6:16,17.) Hence also we conclude, that Papists, as if they had made a bargain with Satan, cruelly give up souls to be destroyed by him at his pleasure, when they wickedly withhold the Scripture from the people of God, and thus deprive them of their arms, by which alone their safety could be preserved. Those who voluntarily throw away that armor, and do not laboriously exercise themselves in the school of God, deserve to be strangled, at every instant, by Satan, into whose hands they give themselves up unarmed. No other reason can be assigned, why the fury of Satan meets with so little resistance, and why so many are everywhere carried away by him, but that God punishes their carelessness, and their contempt of his word.

We must now examine more closely the passage, which is quoted by Christ from Moses: *that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live,* (Deuteronomy 8:3.) There are some

312 "Combien que pour couvrir sa malice;" — "though, to cover his malice."

who torture it to a false meaning, as referring to spiritual life; as if our Lord had said, that souls are not nourished by visible *bread, but by the word of God.* The statement itself is, no doubt, true: but Moses had quite a different meaning. He reminds them that, when no bread could be obtained, God provided them with an extraordinary kind of nourishment in "manna, which they knew not, neither did their fathers know," (Deuteronomy 8:3;) and that this was intended as an evident proof, in all time coming, that the life of man is not confined to *bread,* but depends on the will and good-pleasure of God. *The word* does not mean *doctrine,* but the purpose which God has made known, with regard to preserving the order of nature and the lives of his creatures. Having created men, he does not cease to care for them: but, as "he breathed into their nostrils the breath of life," (Genesis 2:7,) so he constantly preserves the life which he has bestowed. In like manner, the Apostle says, that he "upholdeth all things by his powerful word," (Hebrews 1:3;) that is, the whole world is preserved, and every part of it keeps its place, by the will and decree of Him, whose power, above and below, is everywhere diffused. Though we live on *bread,* we must not ascribe the support of life to the power of *bread,* but to the secret kindness, by which God imparts to bread the quality of nourishing our bodies.

Hence, also, follows another statement: *by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall men live.* God, who now employs bread for our support, will enable us, whenever he pleases, to live by other means. This declaration of Moses condemns the stupidity of those, who reckon life to consist in luxury and abundance; while it reproves the distrust and inordinate anxiety which drives us to seek unlawful means. The precise object of Christ's reply is this: We ought to trust in God for food, and for the other necessaries of the present life, in such a manner, that none of us may overleap the boundaries which he has prescribed. But if Christ did not consider himself to be at liberty to change *stones* into *bread,* without the command of God, much less is it lawful for us to procure food by fraud, or robbery, or violence, or murder.

MATTHEW 4:5-11; MARK 1:13; LUKE 4:5-13

Matthew 4:5-11	Mark 1:13	Luke 4:5-13
5. Then the devil taketh [313] him into the holy city, and placeth him on the pinnacle [314] of the temple, **6**. And saith to him, If thou art the Son of God, throw thyself down: for it is written, He will command his angels concerning thee, and they will carry thee in their hands, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. **7**. Jesus said to him, Again it is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. **8**. Again, the devil taketh him to a very high mountain, and pointeth out to him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; **9**. And saith to him, All these things I will give thee, if, falling down, thou shalt adore me. **10**. Then Jesus saith to him, Depart, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and him alone thou shalt worship. **11**. Then the devil leaveth him, and lo, angels approached, and waited on him.	**13**. And angels waited on him.	**5**. And the devil conducted him to a high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment. **6**. And the devil saith to him, I will give thee this universal power, and the glory of them: for they have been delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it. **7**. If, therefore, bowing down before me, thou shalt worship, all things shall be thine. **8**. And Jesus answering said to him, Go behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and him alone thou shalt worship. **9**. And he led him to Jerusalem, and placed him on a parapet of the temple, and said to him, If thou art the Son of God, throw thyself down hence: **10**. For it is written, that he will command his angels concerning thee, that they may preserve thee: **11**. And that they will support thee with their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone. **12**. And he answering said to him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

313 "Le transporte;" — "conveys him."

314 "Le pinnacle."

		13. And all the temptation having been finished, the devil departed from him for a time.

Matthew 4:5. *Then the devil taketh him.* It is not of great importance, that Luke's narrative makes that temptation to be the second, which Matthew places as the third: for it was not the intention of the Evangelists to arrange the history in such a manner, as to preserve on all occasions, the exact order of time, but to draw up an abridged narrative of the events, so as to present, as in a mirror or picture, those things which are most necessary to be known concerning Christ. Let it suffice for us to know that Christ was tempted in three ways. The question, which of these contests was the second, and which was the third, need not give us much trouble or uneasiness. In the exposition, I shall follow the text of Matthew.

Christ is said to have been *placed on the pinnacle of the temple.* It is asked, was he actually carried to this elevated spot, or was it done in vision? There are many, who obstinately assert, that the body was really and actually conveyed: for they consider it to be unworthy of Christ, that he should be supposed to be liable to the delusions of Satan. But it is easy to dispose of that objection. There is no absurdity in supposing, that this took place by the permission of God and the voluntary subjection of Christ; provided we hold that within, — that is, in his mind and souls, — he suffered no delusion. What is next added, that *all the kingdoms of the world* were placed in the view of Christ, — as well as what Luke relates, that he was carried to a great distance in one moment, — agrees better with the idea of a vision, than with any other supposition. In a matter that is doubtful, and where ignorance brings no risk, I choose rather to suspend my judgment, than to furnish contentious people with an occasion of debate. It is also possible, that the second temptation did not follow the first, nor the third the second, in immediate succession, but that some interval of time elapsed. This is even more probable, though the words of Luke might lead to the conclusion, that there was no long interval: for he says, that Christ obtained repose for a time.

But the main question for our consideration is, what was Satan's object in this kind of temptation? That will be best determined, as I have lately hinted, by our Lord's reply to Satan. To meet the stratagem of the enemy, and to repel his attack, Christ interposes, as a shield, these words: *Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* Hence it is evident, that the stratagems of the enemy were intended to induce Christ to exalt himself unduly, and to rise, in a daring manner, against God. Satan had formerly attempted to drive Christ to despair, because he was destitute of food, and of the ordinary means of life. Now, he exhorts him to indulge a foolish and vain confidences, — to neglect the means which are in his powers, — to throw himself, without necessity, into manifest danger, — and, as we might say, to overleap all bounds. As it is not proper for us to be discouraged, when we are pressed by "the want

of all things," (Deuteronomy 28:57,) but to rely with confidence on God, neither are we at liberty to raise our crests, or ascend higher than God permits us. The design of Satan, we have now ascertained, was to induce Christ to make trial of his divinity, and to rise up, in foolish and wicked rashness, against God.

6. *He will charge his angels concerning thee.* We must observe this malice of Satan, in misapplying a quotation of Scripture, for the purpose of rendering life deadly to Christ, and of converting bread into poison. The same kind of stratagem he continues daily to employ; and the Son of God, who is the universal model of all the godly, chose to undergo this contest in his own person, that all may be industriously on their guard against being led, by a false application of Scripture, into the snares of Satan. And undoubtedly the Lord grants such a permission to our adversary, that we may not remain in indolent ease, but may be more careful to keep watch. Nor ought we to imitate the madness of those who throw away Scripture, as if it admitted of every kind of interpretation, because the devil misapplies it. For the same reason, we ought to abstain from food, to avoid the risk of being poisoned. Satan profanes the Word of God, and endeavors to torture it for our destruction. But it has been ordained by God for our salvation; and shall the purpose of God be frustrated, unless our indolence deprive his word of its saving effect?

We need not dispute long on these matters. Let us only inquire, what Christ enjoins on us by his example, which we ought to follow as a rule. When Satan wickedly tortures Scripture, does Christ give way to him? Does he allow him to seize and carry off the Scripture, with which he formerly armed himself? On the contrary, he quotes Scripture in his turn, and boldly refutes Satan's wicked slander. Whenever Satan shall cover his deception by Scripture, and ungodly men shall labor to subvert our faith by the same means, let us borrow our armor exclusively from Scripture for the protection of our faith.

Though the promise, *he will charge his angels concerning thee,* (Psalm 91:11,) relates to all believers, yet it belongs peculiarly to Christ, who is the Head of the whole Church, possesses authority over angels, and commits to them the charge of us. Satan is not wrong in proving from this passage, that angels have been given to Christ, to wait on him, to guard him, and to bear him on their hands. But the fallacy lies in this, that he assigns a wandering and uncertain course to that guardianship of angels, which is only promised to the children of God, when they keep themselves within their bounds, and walk in their *ways.* If there is any force in that expression, *in all thy ways,* (Psalm 91:11,) the prophet's meaning is wickedly corrupted and mutilated by Satan, when he applies it, in a violent and wild and confused manner, to extravagant and mistaken courses. God commands us to walk *in our ways,* and then declares that angels will be our guardians: Satan brings forward the guardianship of angels, for the purpose of advising Christ to put himself unnecessarily in danger, as if he would say: "If you expose yourself to death, contrary to the will of God, angels will protect your life."

7. *It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* The reply of Christ is most appropriate. There is no other way, in which we have a right to expect the assistance promised in that passage, than when believers humbly submit themselves to his guidance: for we cannot rely on his promises, without obeying his commandments. God is *tempted* in many ways: but in this passage, the word *tempt* denotes the neglect of those means which he puts into our hands. Those who leave the means which God recommends, and resolve to make trial of his power and might, act as absurdly as if one were to cut off a man's arms and hands, and then order him to work. In short, whoever desires to make an experiment of the divine power, when there is no necessity for it, *tempts God* by subjecting his promises to an unfair trial.

8. *The devil taketh him to a very high mountain.* We must keep in mind, what I have already stated, that it was not owing to any weakness of Christ's nature, but to a voluntary dispensation and permission, that Satan produced this effect upon his eyes. Again, while his senses were moved and powerfully affected by the glory of the kingdoms which was presented to them, no inward desire arose in his mind; whereas the lusts of the flesh, like wild beasts, are drawn, and hurry us along, to the objects which please us: for Christ had the same feelings with ourselves, but he had no irregular appetites. The kind of temptation here described was, that Christ should seek, in another manner than from God, the inheritance which he has promised to his children. And here the daring insolence of the devil is manifested, in robbing God of the government of the world, and claiming it for himself. *All these things,* says he, *are mine,* and it is only through me that they are obtained.

We have to contend every day with the same imposture: for every believer feels it in himself and it is still more clearly seen in the whole life of the ungodly. Though we are convinced, that all our support, and aid, and comfort, depend on the blessing of God, yet our senses allure and draw us away, to seek assistance from Satan, as if God alone were not enough. A considerable portion of mankind disbelieve the power and authority of God over the world, and imagine that every thing good is bestowed by Satan. For how comes it, that almost all resort to wicked contrivances, to robbery and to fraud, but because they ascribe to Satan what belongs to God, the power of enriching whom he pleases by his blessing? True, indeed, with the mouth they ask that God will *give them daily bread,* (Matthew 6:11) but it is only with the mouth; for they make Satan the distributor of all the riches in the world.

10. *Depart, Satan.* Instead of this, Luke has, *Depart behind me, Satan.* There is no use for speculating about the phrase, *behind me,* which Christ addressed to Peter, *Go behind me,* (Matthew 16:23,) as if the same words had not been addressed to Satan. Christ simply bids him go away;[315] and now proceeds with the same kind of defense as before, employing

315 "Il vent seulement le rejetter avec son conseil;" — "he wishes only to reject him with his advice."

Scripture as a shield, not of reeds, but of brass. He quotes a passage from the law, that God alone is to be adored and worshipped, (Deuteronomy 6:13; 10:20.) From the application of that passage, and from the circumstances in which it is introduced, it is easy to conclude what is the design of adoration of God, and in what it consists.

Papists deny that God only ought to be adored; and evade this and similar passages by sophistical arguments. *Latria,* (λατρεία,) they admit, is adoration, which ought to be given to God alone: but *Dulia,* (δουλεία,) is an inferior kind of adoration, which they bestow on dead men, and on their bones and statues. But Christ rejects this frivolous distinction, and claims for God alone προσκύνησις, *worship;* by which he warns us to attend more to the matter than to expressions, when we have to do with the worship of God.

Scripture enjoins us to *worship God alone:* we must inquire, for what end? If a man takes any thing from his glory, and ascribes it to creatures, this is a heinous profanation of divine worship. But it is very evident that this is done, when we go to creatures, to receive from them those good things, of which God desired to be acknowledged as the only Author. Now, as religion is strictly spiritual, and the outward acknowledgment of it relates to the body, so not only the inward worship, but also the outward manifestation of it, is due to God alone.[316]

11. *Then the devil leaveth him.* Luke expresses more: *when all the temptation had been finished.* This means, that no truce or relaxation was granted to Christ, till he had been fully tried by every species of contest. He adds, that Christ was *left for a season only.* This is intended to inform us, that the rest of his life was not entirely free from *temptations,* but that God restrained the power of Satan, so that Christ was not unseasonably disturbed by him. In like manner, God usually acts towards all his people: for, after permitting them to be sharply tried, he abates, in some measure, the violence of the strife, that they may take breath for a little, and gather courage. What immediately follows, *the angels waited on him,* I understand as referring to comfort, that Christ might feel, that God the Father took care of him, and fortified him, by his powerful assistance, against Satan. For the very solitude might aggravate the dreariness of his condition, when he was deprived of the kind offices of men, *and was with the wild beasts,* — a circumstance which is expressly mentioned by Mark. And yet we must not suppose, that Christ was ever forsaken by the angels: but, in order to allow an opportunity for temptation, the grace of God, though it was present, was sometimes hidden from him, so far as respects the feeling of the flesh.

316 "Christ attribue aussi a Dieu seul l'adoration externe, que les Grecs appellent προσχύνησις: car il use de ce terme qui signifient proprement *s'agenouiller ET prosterner* par forme de service divin." — "Christ ascribes also to God alone the external adoration, which the Greeks call προσχύνησις: for he employs this term, which signifies literally to *kneel and bow down,* in a form of divine service."

MATTHEW 4:12, 17; MARK 1:14-15;
LUKE 3:19-20; 4:14

Matthew 4:12, 17	Mark 1:14-15	Luke 3:19-20
12. And when Jesus heard that John had been delivered up, [317] he withdrew into Galilee. **17**. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.	**14**. Now after that John had been imprisoned, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God: **15**. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel.	**19**. Now Herod the tetrarch, when he was reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the wicked actions which Herod did, **20**. Added also this above all, and shut up John in prison. Luke 4:14-15 **14**. And Jesus returned by the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report went out through the whole country concerning him. **15**. And he taught in their synagogues, and was glorified by all.

Luke 3:19. *Now Herod the tetrarch.* Luke alone explains the reason why Herod threw John into prison: though we shall afterwards find it mentioned by Matthew 14:3, and Mark 6:17. Josephus says, (Ant. 18, v. 2,) that Herod, dreading a popular insurrection and a change of the government, shut up John in the castle of Macherus, (because he dreaded the man's influence;)[318] and that Herodias was married, not to Philip, who was Salome's husband, but to another Herod. But as his recollection appears to have failed him in this matter, and as he mentions also Philip's death out of its proper place, the truth of the history will be obtained, with greater certainty, from the Evangelists, and we must abide by their testimony.[319] It is well known, that Herod, though he had been married to a daughter of Aretas,

317 "Que Jean estoit prisonnier;" — "that John was prisoner."

318 "Pource qu'il savoit que c'estoit un homme de grande authorite envers le peuple, et pourtant se dutoit de luy." — "Because he knew that he was a man of great authority among the people, and therefore had doubts about him."

319 The solution usually given, we believe, for this apparent discrepancy, is, that the name of the person in question was *Herod-Philip. — Ed.*

King of Arabia, fell in love with Herodias, his niece, and carried her off by fraud. This injury might possibly enough remain unrevenged by his brother Philip, to whom the same Josephus bears testimony, that he was a person of a mild and gentle disposition, (18:4:6.)

This history shows clearly, what sort of reward awaits the faithful and honest ministers of the truth, particularly when they reprove vices: for scarcely one in a hundred bears reproof, and if it is at all severe, they break out into fury. If pride of this sort displays itself in some of the common people, we have no reason to wonder, that cruelty to reprovers assumes a more hideous form in tyrants,[320] who brook nothing worse than to be classed with other men. We behold in John an illustrious example of that moral courage, which all pious teachers ought to possess, not to hesitate to incur the wrath of the great and powerful, as often as it may be found necessary: for he, with whom there is acceptance of persons, does not honestly serve God. When Luke says, he *added this to all the evil actions which he did,* he means, that Herod's malice is become desperate, and has reached its utmost height, when the sinner is enraged by remedies, and not only refuses correction, but takes vengeance on his adviser, as if he had been his enemy.

Matthew 4:12. *When Jesus had heard.* These words appear to be at variance with the narrative of the Evangelist John, who declares, that John and Christ discharged the office of public teachers at the same time. But we have to observe, that our three Evangelists pass over in silence that short space of time, because John's course was not yet completed, and because that course was intended to be a preparation for receiving the Gospel of Christ. And, in point of fact, though Christ discharged the office of teacher within that period, he did not, strictly speaking, begin to *preach the Gospel,* till he succeeded to John. Most properly, therefore, do the three Evangelists admit and declare, that the period, during which John prepared disciples for Christ, belonged to his ministry: for it amounts to this, that, when the dawn was passed, the sun arose. It is proper to observe the mode of expression employed by Luke, that Jesus came *in the power,* or, *by the power, of the Spirit into* Galilee: for it is of great consequence, that we do not imagine Christ to have any thing about him that is earthly or human, but that our minds be always occupied, and our feelings affected by his heavenly and divine power.

Mark 1:14. *Preaching the Gospel of the kingdom of God.* Matthew appears to differ a little from the other two: for, after mentioning that Jesus left his own city Nazareth, and departed to Capernaum, he says: *from that time Jesus began to preach.* Luke and Mark, again, relate, that he taught publicly in his own country. But the solution is easy; for the words which Matthew employs, ἀπὸ τότε, *from that time,* ought to be viewed as referring, not to what immediately precedes, but to the whole course of the narrative. Christ, therefore, entered into the exercise of his office, when he arrived at Galilee. The summary of doctrine

320 "Les rois, princes, et grans tyrans." — "Kings, princes, and great tyrants."

which is given by Matthew is not at all different from what, we have lately seen, was taught by John: for it consists of two parts, — *repentance,* and the announcement of grace and salvation. He exhorts the Jews to conversion, because *the kingdom of God is at hand:* that is, because God undertakes to govern his people, which is true and perfect happiness. The language of Mark is a little different, *The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the Gospel* But the meaning is the same: for, having first spoken of the restoration of the kingdom of God among the Jews, he exhorts them to repentance and faith.

But it may be asked, since *repentance* depends on the Gospel, why does Mark separate it from the *doctrine* of the Gospel? Two reasons may be assigned. God sometimes invites us to repentance, when nothing more is meant, than that we ought to change our life for the better. He afterwards shows, that conversion and "newness of life" (Romans 6:4) are the gift of God. This is intended to inform us, that not only is our duty enjoined on us, but the grace and power of obedience are, at the same time, offered. If we understand in this way the preaching of John about repentance, the meaning will be:" The Lord commands you to turn to himself; but as you cannot accomplish this by your own endeavors, he promises the Spirit of regeneration, and therefore you must receive this grace by faith." At the same time, the faith, which he enjoins men to give to the Gospel, ought not, by any means, to be confined to the gift of renewal, but relates chiefly to the forgiveness of sins. For John connects repentance with faith, because God reconciles us to himself in such a manner, that we serve him as a Father in holiness and righteousness.

Besides, there is no absurdity in saying, that *to believe the Gospel* is the same thing as to embrace a free righteousness: for that special relation, between faith and the forgiveness of sins, is often mentioned in Scripture; as, for example, when it teaches, that we are *justified by faith,* (Romans 5:1.) In which soever of these two ways you choose to explain this passage, it still remains a settled principle, that God offers to us a free salvation, in order that we may turn to him, and live to righteousness. Accordingly, when he promises to us mercy, he calls us to deny the flesh. We must observe the designation which Paul gives to the Gospel, *the kingdom of God:* for hence we learn, that by the preaching of the Gospel *the kingdom of God* is set up and established among men, and that in no other way does God reign among men. Hence it is also evident, how wretched the condition of men is without the Gospel.

Luke 4:15. *He was glorified by all.* This is stated by Luke for the express purpose of informing us, that, from the very commencement, a divine power shone in Christ, and compelled even those, who cherished a malignant spirit of contradiction, to join in admiring him.

LUKE 4:16-22

Luke 4:16-22
16. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and entered, according to his custom, on the Sabbath-day, into the synagogue, and rose up to read. **17**. And the book of Isaiah the Prophet was delivered to him, and, having opened the book, he found the passage where it was written, **18**. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me: he hath sent me to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken in heart, [321] to preach forgiveness to the captives and sight to the blind, to loose by forgiveness those who are bruised, **19**. To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. **20**. Then, when he had closed the book, he returned it to the minister, and sat down: and the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on him. **21**. And he began to say to them, To-day this Scripture hath been fulfilled in your ears. **22**. And all gave him testimony, and wondered at the discourses of grace which proceeded out of his mouth, and said, Is not this the son of Joseph?

16. *And he came to Nazareth* The Evangelists are very careful to show by what sort of proofs Christ became known, a striking instance of which is here related by Luke. By explaining a passage in Isaiah, and applying it to the instruction which was immediately required, he turned upon him the eyes of all. *He entered, according to his custom, into the synagogue* Hence we conclude, that not only did he address the people in the open streets and highways, but, as far as he had opportunity, observed the usual order of the church. We see also that, though the Jews were become very degenerate, though every thing was in a state of confusion, and the condition of the church was miserably corrupted, one good thing still remained: they read the Scriptures publicly, and took occasion from them to teach and admonish the people.

Hence also it is evident, what was the true and lawful method of keeping *the Sabbath.* When God commanded his people to abstain from working on that day, it was not that they might give themselves up to indolent repose, but, on the contrary, that they might exercise themselves in meditating on his works. Now, the minds of men are naturally blind to the consideration of his works, and must therefore be guided by the rule of Scripture. Though Paul includes the *Sabbath* in an enumeration of the shadows of the law, (Colossians 2:16,) yet, in this respect, our manner of observing it is the same with that of the Jews: the people must assemble to hear the word, to public prayers, and to the other exercises of religion. It was for this purpose that the Jewish Sabbath was succeeded by the Lord's Day.

Now, if we make a comparison of dates, this passage will be sufficient to prove clearly, that the corruptions of the Papal Hierarchy, in our own time, are more shocking and detest-

321 "Pour guarir ceux qui ont le coeur froisse;" — "to heal those who have the heart bruised."

able than those which existed among the Jews under the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas. For the reading of Scripture, which was then in use, has not only grown obsolete under the Pope, but is driven from the churches by fire and sword; with this exception, that such portions of it, as they think proper, are chanted by them in an unknown tongue. Christ *rose up to read,* not only that his voice might be better heard, but in token of reverence: for the majesty of Scripture deserves that its expounders should make it apparent, that they proceed to handle it with modesty and reverence.

17. *He found the passage* There is no doubt that Christ deliberately selected this passage. Some think that it was presented to him by God;[322] but, as a liberty of choice was allowed him, I choose to say that, by his own judgment, he took this passage in preference to others. Isaiah there predicts that, after the Babylonish captivity, there will still be witnesses of the grace of God, who shall gather the people from destruction, and from the darkness of death, and restore, by a spiritual power, the Church, which has been overwhelmed by so many calamities. But as that redemption was to be proclaimed in the name and authority of Christ alone, he uses the singular number, and speaks in the name of Christ, that he may more powerfully awaken the minds of the godly to strong confidence. It is certain, that what is here related belongs properly to Christ alone, for two reasons: *first,* because he alone was endued with the fullness of the Spirit, (John 3:34,) to be the witness and ambassador of our reconciliation to God; (and, for this reason, Paul (Ephesians 2:17) assigns peculiarly to him, what belongs to all the ministers of the Gospel, namely, that he, "came and preached peace to them which were afar off, and to them that were nigh:") *secondly,* because he alone, by the power of his Spirit, performs and grants all the benefits that are here promised.

18. *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me* These words inform us that, both in his own person and in his ministers, Christ does not act by human authority, or in a private capacity, but has been sent by God to restore salvation to his Church. He does nothing by the suggestion or advice of men, but everything by the guidance of the Spirit of God; and this he declares, in order that the faith of the godly may be founded on the authority and power of God. The next clause, *because he hath anointed me,* is added by way of explanation. Many make a false boast, that they have the Spirit of God, while they are destitute of his gifts: but Christ proves by the *anointing,* as the effect, that he is endued with the Spirit of God. He then states the purpose for which the graces of the Spirit were bestowed upon him. It was, *that he might preach the Gospel to the poor* Hence we conclude, that those, who are sent by God to preach the Gospel, are previously furnished with necessary gifts, to qualify them for so important an office. It is, therefore, very ridiculous that, under the pretense of a divine calling, men totally unfit for discharging the office should take upon themselves the name of pastors. We

322 "Aucuns pensent que par la volonte de Dieu il l'ait recontre sans le chercher." — "Some think that, by the will of God, he found it without seeking for it."

have an instance of this in the Papacy, where mitred bishops, who are more ignorant than as many asses, proudly and openly vaunt, that they are Christ's Vicars, and the only lawful prelates of the Church. We are expressly informed, that the Lord anoints his servants, because the true and efficacious preaching of the Gospel, as Paul says, does not lie "in the enticing words of man's wisdom," but in the heavenly power of the Spirit.

To the poor The prophet shows what would be the state of the Church before the manifestation of the Gospel, and what is the condition of all of us without Christ. Those persons to whom God promises restoration are called *poor,* and *broken,* and *captives,* and *blind,* and *bruised* The body of the people was oppressed by so many miseries, that these descriptions applied to every one of its members. Yet there were many who, amidst their poverty, blindness, slavery, and death, flattered themselves, or were insensible to their condition. The consequence was, that few were prepared to accept this grace.

And, *first,* we are here taught what is the design of the preaching of the Gospel, and what advantage it brings to us. We were altogether overwhelmed by every kind of evils: but there God cheers us by his life-giving light, to rescue us from the deep abyss of death, and to restore us to complete happiness. It tends, in no ordinary degree, to recommend the Gospel, that we obtain from it inestimable advantage. *Secondly,* we see who are invited by Christ, and made partakers of promised grace. They are persons, who are every way miserable, and destitute of all hope of salvation. But we are reminded, on the other hand, that we cannot enjoy those benefits which Christ bestows, in any other manner, than by being humbled under a deep conviction of our distresses, and by coming, as hungry souls, to seek him as our deliverer: for all who swell with pride, and do not groan under their *captivity,* nor are displeased with their *blindness,* lend a deaf ear to this prediction, and treat it with contempt.

19. *To preach the acceptable year of the Lord* Many think that here the prophet makes an allusion to the Jubilee, and I have no objection to that view. But it is proper to observe, that he purposely anticipates a doubt, which might disturb and shake weak minds, while the Lord held them in suspense, by delaying so long the promised salvation. He therefore makes the time of redemption to depend on the purpose, or good pleasure, of God. "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee." Paul calls it *the fullness of the time,* (Galatians 4:4,) that believers may learn not to indulge in excessive curiosity, but to acquiesce in the will of God, — and that we may rest satisfied with the conviction, that salvation was manifested in Christ, at the time which seemed good in the sight of God.

20. *The eyes of all who were in the synagogue* God touched their hearts, I doubt not, with astonishment, which made them more attentive, and induced them to listen to Christ, while he was speaking. For they must have been withheld from opposing this discourse at the commencement, or breaking it off in the midst, when they were sufficiently disposed, as we shall see, to treat Christ with contempt.

21. *Today is fulfilled* Christ did not merely affirm in a few words, but proved by a reference to facts, that the time was now come, when it was the will of God to restore his ruined church. The object of his discourse was, to expound the prediction clearly to his hearers: just as expositors handle Scripture in a proper and orderly manner, when they apply it to the circumstances of those whom they address. He says that it was *fulfilled in their ears,* rather than *in their eyes,* because the bare sight of the fact was of little value, if doctrine had not held the chief place.

22. *And all gave testimony to him* Here Luke draws our attention, first, to the truly divine grace, which breathed in the lips of Christ; and then presents a lively picture of the ingratitude of men. Using a Hebrew idiom, he calls them *discourses of grace,* — that is, *discourses* which manifested the power and *grace* of the Holy Spirit. The inhabitants of Nazareth are thus compelled to acknowledge and admire God speaking in Christ; and yet they voluntarily refuse to render to the heavenly doctrine of Christ the honor which it deserves. *Is not this the son of Joseph?* Instead of regarding this circumstance as an additional reason for glorifying God, they bring it forward as an objection, and wickedly make it a ground of offense, that they may have some plausible excuse for rejecting what is said by *the son of Joseph.* Thus we daily see many who, while they are convinced that what they hear is the word of God, seize on frivolous apologies for refusing to obey it. And certainly the only reason why we are not affected, as we ought to be, by the power of the Gospel, is, that we throw hinderances in our own way, and that our malice quenches that light, the power of which we are unwilling to acknowledge.

LUKE 4:23-30

Luke 4:23-30
23. And he saith to them, Ye will altogether [323] say to me this comparison, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever things we have heard done in Capernaum, do thou also here in thy country. **24**. And he saith, Verily, I say to you, No prophet is acceptable in his own country. **25**. But in truth I say to you, There were many widows, in the days of Elijah, in Israel, when heaven was shut up three years and six months, so that there was great famine through all the land; **26**. And to none of them was Elijah sent, but to a woman, a widow, in Zarephath of Zidon. **27**. And there were many lepers in Israel, in the time of Elisha the prophet, and not one of them was cleansed, but Naaman, a Syrian. **28**. And all were filled with wrath in the synagogue, hearing these things, **29**. And rose up, and drove him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him down. [324] **30**. And he, passing through the midst of them, went away. [325]

23. *Physician, heal thyself* From the words of Christ it may be easily inferred, that he was treated with contempt by the inhabitants of Nazareth: for he states publicly those thoughts, which he knew to exist in their minds. He afterwards imputes to them the blame of his declining to work miracles among them, and charges them with malice, in bestowing no honor on a prophet of God. The objection, which he anticipates, is this: "There is no reason to wonder, if his countrymen hold him in little estimation, since he does not dignify his own country, as he does other places, by working miracles; and, consequently, it is but a just revenge, if his own countrymen, whom he treats with less respect than all others, are found to reject him." Such is the meaning of the common proverb, that a physician ought to begin with himself, and those immediately connected with him, before he exhibits his skill in healing others. The amount of the objection is, that Christ acts improperly, in paying no respect to his own country, while he renders other cities of Galilee illustrious by his miracles. And this was regarded by the inhabitants of Nazareth as a fair excuse for rejecting him in their turn.

24. *Verily, I say to you* He reproaches them with the blame of preventing him from exerting his power among them as he did in other places, by working miracles: for the unbelief of men presents an obstruction to God, and hinders him from working, as might be desired, for their salvation, (Matthew 13:58; Mark 6:5.) Christ could not perform any miracle among

323 "Omnino." — "Tout a plein."

324 "Pour le jetter du haut en bas;" — "to throw him from top to bottom."

325 "Mais il passa par le milieu d'eux, et s'en alla." — "But he passed through the midst of them, and went away."

them, because "they did not believe on him," (John 12:37.) Not that it is in the power of men to bind the hands of God, but that he withholds the advantage of his works from those who are rendered unworthy of them by their infidelity. The answer given by Christ amounts to this: "If you wish to have a share in miracles, why do you not give place to God? or rather, why do you proudly reject the minister of his power? You receive, therefore, a just reward for your contempt, when I pass by you, and give a preference to other places, for proving by miracles, that I am the Messiah of God, who have been appointed to restore the church."

And, certainly, it was intolerable ingratitude that, when God was pleased to have his Son brought up in their city, such a person, who had been among them from his infancy, was despised. Justly, therefore, did he withdraw his hand, that it might not be exposed to the derision of those wicked despisers.[326] Hence we learn what value the Lord puts on his word, when, in order to punish for the contempt of it, he takes from the midst of us those favors, which are the testimonies of his presence. With respect to that saying, *no prophet is acceptable in his own country,* the reader may consult what I have said on a saying of the same import, recorded by the Evangelist John: "A prophet hath no honor in his own country," (John 4:44.)

25. *There were many widows* After throwing back upon themselves the blame of their being deprived of miracles, he produces two examples to prove, that they ought not to think it strange, if God prefers strangers to the inhabitants of the country, and that they ought not to find fault with him for obeying the call of God, as was formerly done by Elijah and Elisha. He throws out an indirect hint as to their vanity and presumption, in entertaining a dislike of him, because he had been brought up among them. *When there was a great famine for three years and a half, there were many widows in Israel,* whose want of food Elijah was not commanded to relieve, but *he was sent to a woman,* who belonged to a foreign nation, *Zidon,* (1 Kings 17:9.) In like manner, *Elisha* healed no *lepers* among his countrymen, but he healed *Naaman, a Syrian,* (2 Kings 5:10.)

Though his reproofs strike the inhabitants of Nazareth with peculiar severity, yet he charges the whole nation with ingratitude, because, for a long period, almost all of them had proceeded to more shameful contempt of the Lord, in proportion as he had approached nearer to them. For how did it come about, that a woman, who was a foreigner, was preferred by God to all the Israelites, but because the prophet had been rejected by them, and compelled to seek refuge in a heathen land? And why did God choose that *Naaman, a Syrian,* should be healed by *Elisha,* but to put a disgrace on the nation of Israel? The meaning, therefore, is, that the same thing happens now as in former times, when God sends his power to a great distance among foreigners, because he is rejected by the inhabitants of the country.

326 "Afin de n.e servir de passe temps a de si meschans contempteurs des graces de Dieu." — "That it might not serve for amusement to such wicked despisers of God's favors."

Meanwhile, Christ intimates that, though he is despised by his countrymen, his glory is in no degree diminished: because God will still be able, to their shame and confusion, to dignify and exalt his Son, as he formerly gave honor to his prophets in the midst of the Gentiles. In this way the foolish glorying in the flesh is repressed, when we see the Lord rain, not only where and when he pleases, but in distant corners, to the neglect of that country which he had chosen for his residence. Hence, also, may be collected the general doctrine that we have no right to prescribe any rule to God in disposing his benefits, so as to prevent him from rejecting those who hold the highest rank, and conferring honor on the lowest and most contemptible; and that we are not at liberty to oppose him, when he entirely subverts that order, which would have approved itself to our judgment. Our attention is, no doubt, drawn to a contrast between Israel and the heathen nations: but still we ought to hold, that none are chosen, in preference to others, for their own excellence, but that it proceeds rather from the wonderful purpose of God, the height and depth of which, though the reason may be hidden from us, we are bound to acknowledge and adore.

28. *Were filled with wrath* They perceived that the object of those two examples, which Christ had produced, was to show, that the grace of God would be removed from them to others:[327] and therefore they considered that he had spoken to their dishonor. But, instead of having their consciences stung to the quick, and seeking a remedy for their vices by correcting them, they are only driven to madness. Thus ungodly men not only resist, with obstinacy, the judgments of God, but rise into cruelty against his servants. Hence it is evident, how forcible are the reproofs which proceed from the Spirit of God: for the minds of those who would willingly evade them,[328] are inflamed with rage. Again, when we see that the minds of men are so envenomed, that they become mad against God, whenever they are treated with some degree of roughness, we ought to implore the Spirit of meekness, (Galatians 5:23,) that we may not be driven, by the same fury, into such a destructive war.[329]

30. *But he, passing through the midst of them* When Luke says, that Jesus passed through the middle of the crowd, and so escaped out of their hands, he means that God rescued him, by an extraordinary miracle, from immediate death. This example teaches us that, though our adversaries may prevail so far, that our life may seem to be placed at their disposal, yet that the power of God will always be victorious to preserve us, so long as he shall be pleased

327 "Que la grace de Dieu leur seroit ostee, et envoyee a autres;" — "that the grace of God would be taken from them, and sent to others."

328 "Qui les laisseroyent volontiers escouler sans y penser;" — "who would willingly allow them to steal away, without thinking of them."

329 "Afin que ne soyons transportez a entreprendre une guerre si folle, a nostre grande confusion;" — "in order that we may not be hurried away, to undertake a war so foolish, to our great confusion."

to keep us in the world, either by tying their hands, or by blinding their eyes, or by stupifying their minds and hearts.

MATTHEW 4:13-16

Matthew 4:13-16
13. And having left Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is a town on the sea-coast in the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali, **14**. That it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, **15**. The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, near the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: **16**. The people who sat [330] in darkness have seen a great light: and to those who sat in the region and shadow of death light hath arisen.

13. *And having left Nazareth* I have thought it proper to introduce this passage of Matthew, immediately after Luke's narrative, which we have just examined; because we may gather from the context that, as Christ had hitherto been wont to frequent the town of Nazareth, so, in order to avoid danger, he now bade a final adieu to it, and dwelt in Capernaum and the neighboring towns. There would be no difficulty in this history, were it not that there is some appearance, as if Matthew had put a wrong meaning on the quotation from the prophet. But if we attend to the true meaning of the prophet, it will appear to be properly and naturally accommodated to the present occasion. Isaiah, after having described a very heavy calamity of the nation, soothes their grief by a promise that, when the nation shall be reduced to extremity, a deliverance will immediately follow, which shall dispel the darkness, and restore the light of life.

The words are:

> "Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness shall see a great light" (Isaiah 9:1,2.)

The Israelites had been twice visited by a heavy calamity: first, when four tribes, or thereby, were carried away into banishment, by Tiglath-Pileser, (2 Kings 15:29;) and, secondly, when Shalmaneser completed the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, (2 Kings 18:9.) There remained a third desolation, which — the prophet had foretold towards the close of the eighth chapter — would be the most dreadful of all. And now follows, in the words which we have quoted, what is calculated to soothe their grief. God will stretch out his hand to his people, and, therefore, death will be more tolerable than the previous diseases were. "Though the whole nation," says he, "shall be destroyed, yet so brilliant shall be the light of grace, that there will be less dimness in this last destruction than in the two former instances, when the ten tribes were ruined."

330 "Le peuple, qui gisoit en tenebres;" — "The people that lay in darkness."

The promise ought to be extended, I have no doubt, to the whole body of the people, which might seem to be, to all appearance, lost and destroyed. It is very absurd in the Jews to confine it to the deliverance of the city of Jerusalem. as if the light of life had been restored to it, when the siege was raised by the flight of King Sennacherib,[331] (2 Kings 19: 36.) Certainly, it is evident from the context, that the prophet looks much farther; and, as he promises a universal restoration of the whole church, it follows that *the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and Galilee of the Gentiles,* are included in the number of those, to whom the darkness of death would be changed into the light of life. The commencement of this light, and, as we might say, the dawn, was the return of the people from Babylon. At length, Christ, "the Sun of Righteousness," (Malachi 4:2,) arose in full splendor, and, by his coming, utterly *"abolished"* (2 Timothy 1:10) the darkness of death.

In the same manner, Paul reminds us, that it was a fulfillment of what occurs in many passages of the prophets, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead," (Ephesians 5:14.) Now, we know that the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, and, therefore, the light of salvation which it brings, and all the assistance which we derive from it, must correspond to its nature. Hence it follows, that our souls are plunged in the darkness of everlasting death, till he enlightens them by his grace. The prophet's discourse relates, no doubt, to the destruction of the nation, but presents to us, as in a mirror, what is the condition of mankind, until they are delivered by the grace of Christ. When *those, who lay in darkness,* are said to *have seen a great light,* a change so sudden and remarkable is intended to enlarge our views of the greatness of the divine salvation. Lower Galilee is called *Galilee of the Gentiles,* not only on account of its vicinity to Tyre and Sidon, but because its inhabitants were a mixture of Jews and Gentiles, particularly after that David had granted some cities to King Hiram.[332]

331 "Lors que le Roy Sennacherib fut contreint de lever le siege de de-rant, et s'enfuir honteusement." — "When King Sennacherib was compelled to raise the siege, and to fly disgracefully."

332 This appears to refer to a gift, not of David, but of Solomon: for we are told, (1 Kings 9:11,) that" *King Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee." — Ed.*

MATTHEW 4:18-25; MARK 1:16-20; LUKE 5:1-11

Matthew 4:18-25	Mark 1:16-20	Luke 5:1-11
18. And Jesus, walking near the sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon surnamed Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. **19**. And he saith to them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. **20**. And they, having left their nets, immediately followed him. **21**. And advancing thence, he saw other two brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets: and he called them. **22**. And they immediately, having left the ship and their father, followed him. **23**. And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease, and every illness among the people. **24**. And the report of him spread into the whole of Syria: and they brought to him all who were ill and afflicted with various diseases and torments, and demoniancs,	**16**. Now, as he was walking near the sea of Galilee, he seeth Simon and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. **17**. And Jesus said to them, Follow me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. **18**. And immediately having left their nets, they followed him. **19**. And advancing thence a little, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who themselves also were mending their nets in the ship. **20**. And immediately he called them: and they, having left their father Zebedee in the ship with the workmen, [333] followed him.	**1**. And it happened, while the crowd was pressing upon him, that they might hear the word of God, and he stood near the lake of Gennesaret, **2**. And he saw two ships standing [334] at the lake: and the fishers had gone down out of them, and were washing their nets. **3**. And entering into one of the ships, which was Simon's, he asked him to draw it a little from the land: and sitting down, he taught the multitudes out of the ship. **4**. And when he ceased to speak, he said to Simon, Pull out to the deep, and loose your nets for catching. **5**. And Simon answering said to him, Master, laboring through the whole night, we have taken nothing: yet at thy word I will loose the net. **6**. And when they had done this, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net was broken. **7**. And they made signs to their companions, who were in the other ship, that they might come and help them.

334 "Stantes;" — "et voyant deux nasselles qui estoyent pres du lac;" — "and seeing two ships which were near the lake."

333 "Avec les ouvriers."

and lunatics, and those that had palsy, and he healed them. **25**. And great multitudes followed him from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from the country beyond Jordan.		And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they were sinking. **8**. Which when Simon Peter had seen, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man. [335] **9**. For astonishment had overpowered him, and all were with him, on account of the draught of fishes which they had taken: **10**. And in like manner James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were companions of Simon. And Jesus saith to Simon, Fear not: for henceforth thou shalt catch men. **11**. And having brought the ships to land, and having left all, they followed him.

Matthew 4:18. *And Jesus walking.* As this history is placed by Luke after the two miracles, which we shall afterwards see, an opinion has commonly prevailed, that the miracle, which is here related by him, was performed some time after that they had been called by Christ.[336] But the reason, which they allege, carries little weight: for no fixed and distinct order of dates was observed by the Evangelists in composing their narratives. The consequence is, that they disregard the order of time, and satisfy themselves with presenting, in a summary manner, the leading transactions in the life of Christ. They attended, no doubt, to the years, so as to make it plain to their readers, in what manner Christ was employed, during the course of three years, from the commencement of his preaching till his death. But miracles,

335 "Homo peccator;" — "homme pecheur;" — "a man a sinner."

336 "Quelque temps apresque Jesus Christ ent appelle a soy Pierre, Andre, Jean, et Jaques." — "Some time after that Jesus Christ had called to himself Peter, Andrew, John, and James."

which took place nearly about the same time, are freely intermixed: which will afterwards appear more clearly from many examples.[337]

That it is the same history, which is given by the three Evangelists, is proved by many arguments: but we may mention one, which will be sufficient to satisfy any reader, who is not contentious. All the three agree in stating, that Peter and Andrew, James and John, were made apostles. If they had been previously called, it would follow that they were apostates, who had forsaken their Master, despised their calling, and returned to their former occupation. There is only this difference between Luke and the other two, that he alone relates the miracle, which the others omit. But it is not uncommon with the Evangelists, to touch slightly one part of a transaction, and to leave out many of the circumstances. There is, therefore, no absurdity in saying, that a miracle, which is related by one, has been passed over by the other two. And we must bear in mind what John says, that, out of the innumerable miracles "which Jesus did," (John 21:25,) a part only has been selected, which was sufficient to prove his divine power, and to confirm our faith in him. There is therefore no reason to wonder, if the calling of the four apostles is slightly touched by Matthew and Mark, while the occasion of it is more fully explained by Luke.

Luke 5:1. *He stood near the lake.* Matthew and Mark, according to the usual custom of their language, call it *the sea of Galilee.* The proper name of this lake among the ancient Hebrews was ⊠⊠⊠, (*Chinnereth*;)[338] but, when the language became corrupted, the word was changed to *Gennesaret.* Profane authors call it *Gennesar;* and that part, which lay towards Galilee, was called by them *the sea of Galilee.* The bank, which adjoined to Tiberias, received its name from that city. Its breadth and situation will be more appropriately discussed in another place. Let us now come to the fact here related.

Luke says, that Christ entered into a ship which belonged to Peter, and *withdrew to a moderate distance from the land,* that he might more conveniently address from it the multitudes, who flocked from various places to hear him; and that, after discharging the office of teaching, he exhibited a proof of his divine power by a miracle. It was no unusual thing, indeed, that fishers cast their nets, on many occasions, with little advantage: and that all their fruitless toil was afterwards recompensed by one successful throw. But it was proved to be a miracle by this circumstance, that they had taken nothing during the whole night, (which, however, is more suitable for catching fish,) and that suddenly *a great multitude of*

337 "Ils ne s'amusent pas, esplucher de pres lequel est le premier, ou le *second."* — *"They* do not give themselves the trouble of investigating closely which is first or second."

338 *Chinnereth* occurs in Joshua, (19:35,) as the name of an adjoining city, from which the lake probably derived its name. In the French copy, our author gives it *Cinerot,* or, as we have it, (Joshua 11:2,) *Chinneroth.* But that word contains a *Vau,* which is here wanting: though it must be owned that, when it is connected with a *Cholem* point, that letter is often inserted, or left out, according to the pleasure of the writer. — *Ed.*

fishes was collected into their nets, sufficient to fill the ships. Peter and his companions, therefore, readily conclude that a *take,* so far beyond the ordinary quantity, was not accidental, but was bestowed on them by a divine interposition.

Luke 5:5. *Master, toiling all the night, we have taken nothing.* The reason why Peter calls him *Master* unquestionably is, that he knows Christ to be accustomed to discharge the office of a *Teacher,* and is moved with reverence toward him. But he has not yet made such progress as to deserve to be ranked among his disciples: for our sentiments concerning Christ do not render him sufficient honor, unless we embrace his doctrine by the obedience of faith, and know what he requires from us. He has but a slender perception — if he has any at all — of the value of the Gospel; but the deference which he pays to Christ is manifested by this, that, when worn out by fruitless toil, he commences anew what he had already attempted in vain. Yet it cannot be denied, that he highly esteemed Christ, and had the highest respect for his authority. But a particular instance of faith, rendered to a single command of Christ, would not have made Peter a Christian, or given him a place among the sons of God, if he had not been led on, from this first act of submission, to a full obedience. But, as Peter yielded so readily to the command of Christ, whom he did not yet know to be a Prophet or the Son of God, no apology can be offered for our disgraceful conduct, if, while we call him our *Lord,* and *King,* and *Judge,* (Isaiah 33:*22,)* we do not move a finger to perform our duty, to which we have ten times received his commands.

Luke 5:6. *They inclosed a great multitude of fishes.* The design of the miracle undoubtedly was, to make known Christ's divinity, and thus to induce Peter and others to become his disciples. But we may draw from this instance a general instruction, that we have no reason to be afraid lest our labor should not be attended by the blessing of God and desirable success, when it is undertaken by the authority and guidance of Christ. Such was the *multitude of fishes,* that *the ships were sinking,* and the minds of the spectators were thus excited to admiration: for it must have been in consequence of the divine glory of Christ manifested by this miracle, that his authority was fully acknowledged.

Luke 5:8. *Depart from me, O Lord.* Although men are earnest in seeking the presence of God, yet, as soon as God appears, they must be struck with terror, and almost rendered lifeless by dread and alarm, until he administers consolation. They have the best reason for calling earnestly on God, because they cannot avoid feeling that they are miserable, while he is absent from them: and, on the other hand, his presence is appalling, because they begin to feel that they are nothing, and that they are overpowered by an immense mass of evils. In this manner, Peter views Christ with reverence in the miracle, and yet is so overawed by his majesty, that he does all he can to avoid his presence. Nor was this the case with Peter alone: for we learn, from the context, that *astonishment had overpowered all who were with him.* Hence we see, that it is natural to all men to tremble at the presence of God. And this is of advantage to us, in order to humble any foolish confidence or pride that may be in us,

provided it is immediately followed by soothing consolation. And so Christ relieves the mind of Peter by a mild and friendly reply, *saying to him, Fear not.* Thus Christ sinks his own people in the grave, that he may afterwards raise them to life.[339]

Luke 5:10. *For afterwards thou shalt catch men.* The words of Matthew are, *I will make you fishers of men;* and those of Mark are, *I will cause that you may become fishers of men.* They teach us, that Peter, and the other three, were not only gathered by Christ to be his disciples, but were made apostles, or, at least, chosen with a view to the apostleship. It is, therefore, not merely a general call to faith, but a special call to a particular office, that is here described. The duties of instruction, I do admit, are not yet enjoined upon them; but still it is to prepare them for being instructors,[340] that Christ receives and admits them into his family. This ought to be carefully weighed; for all are not commanded to leave their parents and their former occupation, and literally[341] to follow Christ. There are some whom the Lord is satisfied with having in his flock and his Church, while he assigns to others their own station. Those who have received from him a public office ought to know, that something more is required from them than from private individuals. In the case of others, our Lord makes no change as to the ordinary way of life; but he withdraws those four disciples from the employment from which they had hitherto derived their subsistence, that he may employ their labors in a nobler office.

Christ selected rough mechanics, — persons not only destitute of learning, but inferior in capacity, that he might train, or rather renew them by the power of his Spirit, so as to excel all the wise men of the world. He intended to humble, in this manner, the pride of the flesh, and to present, in their persons, a remarkable instance of spiritual grace, that we may learn to implore from heaven the light of faith, when we know that it cannot be acquired by our own exertions. Again, though he chose unlearned and ignorant persons, he did not leave them in that condition; and, therefore, what he did ought not to be held by us to be an example, as if we were now to ordain pastors, who were afterwards to be trained to the discharge of their office. We know the rule which he prescribes for us, by the mouth of Paul that none ought to be called to it, unless they are "apt to teach," (1 Timothy 3:2.) When our Lord chose persons of this description it was not because he preferred ignorance to learning

339 "Et c'est la coustume du Seigneur d'abbattre les siens, et comme les plonger dedans le sepulcher, afin de les vivifier puis apres." — "And it is customary with the Lord to strike down his own people, and, as it were, to sink them in the grave, that he may raise them to life afterwards."

340 "Il les prend en sa compagnie et conversation domestique, afin de les faconner a enseigner puis apres les autres." — "He takes them into his society and private conversation, in order to prepare them afterwards to instruct others."

341 "Pour suivre Christ des pieds, c'est a dire exterieurement;" — "to follow Christ with the feet, that is to *say,* externally."

as some fanatics do, who are delighted with their own ignorance, and fancy that, in proportion as they hate literature, they approach the nearer to the apostles. He resolved at first, no doubt, to choose contemptible persons, in order to humble the pride of those who think that heaven is not open to the unlearned; but he afterwards gave to those fishers, as an associate in their office, Paul, who had been carefully educated from his childhood.

As to the meaning of the metaphor, *fishers of men,* there is no necessity for a minute investigation. Yet, as it was drawn from the present occurrence, the allusion which Christ made to *fishing,* when he spoke of the preaching of the Gospel, was appropriate: for men stray and wander in the world, as in a great and troubled sea, till they are gathered by the Gospel. The history related by the Evangelist John (1:37-42.) differs from this: for Andrew, who had been one of John's disciples, was handed over by him to Christ, and afterwards brought his brother along with him. At that time, they embraced him as their master, but were afterwards elevated to a higher rank.

Matthew 4:22. *And they immediately left the ship.* The *first* thing that strikes us here is the power of Christ's voice. Not that his voice alone makes so powerful an impression on the hearts of men: but those whom the Lord is pleased to lead and draw to himself, are inwardly addressed by his Spirit, that they may obey his voice. The *second* is, the commendation bestowed on the docility and ready obedience of his disciples, who prefer the call of Christ to all worldly affairs. The ministers of the Word ought, in a particular manner, to be directed by this example, to lay aside all other occupations, and to devote themselves unreservedly to the Church, to which they are appointed.

Matthew 4:23. *And Jesus went about all Galilee.* The same statement is again made by Matthew in another place, **(**9:35**.)** But though Christ was constantly employed in performing almost innumerable miracles, we ought not to think it strange, that they are again mentioned, twice or thrice, in a general manner. In the words of Matthew we ought, first, to observe, that Christ never remained in one place, but scattered every where the seed of *the Gospel.* Again, Matthew calls it *the Gospel of the kingdom,* by which *the kingdom* of God is established among men for their salvation. True and eternal happiness is thus distinguished from the prosperity and joys of the present life.

When Matthew says, that Christ *healed every disease,* the meaning is, that he healed every *kind* of disease. We know, that all who were diseased were not cured; but there was no class of diseases, that was ever presented to him, which he did not *heal.* An enumeration is given of particular kinds of *diseases,* in which Christ displayed his power. *Demoniacs* (διαμονιζομένοι) is a name given in Scripture, not to all indiscriminately who are tormented by the devil, but to those who, by a secret vengeance of God, are given up to Satan, so that he holds possession of their minds and of their bodily senses. *Lunatics* (σεληνιαζομένοι)[342]

342 Σεληνιάζομαι, like the adjective σεληνιαχὸς, is derived from σελήνη, *the moon.* Among, the Greeks and Romans, as well as among the Jews, certain violent diseases, the variations of which could not be easily explained,

is the name given to those, in whom the strength of the disease increases or diminishes, according to the waxing or waning of the moon, such as those who are afflicted with epilepsy,[343] or similar diseases. As we know, that diseases of this sort cannot be healed by natural means, it follows that, when Christ miraculously *healed them,* he proved his divinity.

were supposed to be affected by the phases of *the moon.* Till lately, mental derangement was universally believed among ourselves to be influenced by similar causes; if indeed there be not some who still defend that opinion by plausible arguments. Scripture was not. intended to determine questions of physical science, in which inductive reasoning is a sufficient guide, but to declare those truths, which could never have been known without an express revelation. The term σεληνιαζομένοι, in this and similar passages, does not imply, that the sacred writers supported the common opinion, any more than the English word *lunatic,* used with equal freedom by philosophers and by the unlearned, countenances an exploded theory, — any more, in short, than the popular use of the phrases, *the rising and setting of the sun,* expresses a belief that it is the motion of the sun, and not of the earth, that produces the succession of day and night. — *Ed.*

343 "Comitiali morbo." The Romans gave the name of *comitialis morbus* to this disease, in consequence of the singular fact, that their *comitia,* or public assemblies, were instantly broken up, when any one present was seized with a fit of *epilepsy. — Ed.*

MARK 1:21-28; LUKE 4:31-36

Mark 1:21-28	Luke 4:31-36
21. And they entered into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbaths, entering into the synagogue, he taught. **22**. And they were astonished at his doctrine; for he was teaching them, as one invested with authority, and not as the Scribes. **23**. And there was in their synagogue a man liable to an unclean spirit, who cried out, **24**. Saying, Ah! what have I to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. **25**. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold they peace, and go out of him. **26**. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and had cried with a loud voice, he went out from him. **27**. And all were astonished, so that they inquired among themselves, saying, What is this? What new doctrine is this? for with authority he commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey him. **28**. And immediately his fame went out into every part of Galilee.	**31**. And he went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and there he taught them on the Sabbath-day: **32**. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was accompanied with power. **33**. And there was in the synagogue a man having a spirit of an unclean devil: and he cried out with a loud voice, **34**. Saying, Ah! what have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. **35**. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Holy thy peace, and go out of him. And when the devil had thrown him down in the midst, he went out of him, and hurt him nothing. **36**. And trembling came upon all, and they talked among themselves, saying, What speech is this? for with authority and power he commandeth the uclean spirits, and they go out.

This demoniac was probably one of that multitude, which was mentioned, a little before, by Matthew 4:24. Yet the narrative of Mark and Luke is not superfluous: for they relate some circumstances, which not only present the miracle in a more striking light, but also contain useful instruction. The devil dexterously acknowledges, that Christ is *the Holy One of God,* in order to insinuate into the minds of men a suspicion, that there was some secret understanding between him and Christ. By such a trick he has since endeavored to make the Gospel suspected, and, in the present day, he is continually making similar attempts. That is the reason why Christ rebukes him. It is, no doubt, possible, that this confession was violently extorted from him: but there is no inconsistency between the two suppositions, that he is forced to yield to the power of Christ, and therefore *cries out* that he is *the Holy One of God,* — and yet that he cunningly attempts to shroud in his own darkness the glory of Christ. At the same time, we must observe that, while he flatters Christ in this manner, he indirectly withdraws himself from his power, and in this way contradicts himself. For why

was Christ sanctified by the Father, but that he might deliver men from the tyranny of the devil, and overturn his kingdom? But as Satan cannot endure that power, which he feels to be destructive to himself, he would desire that Christ should satisfy himself with an empty title, without exercising it on the present occasion.[344]

Mark 1:22; **Luke 4:32.** *And they were astonished at his doctrine* The meaning of the Evangelists is, that the power of the Spirit shone in the preaching[345] of Christ with such brightness, as to extort admiration even from irreligious and cold hearers. Luke says, that *his discourse was accompanied with power,* that is, full of majesty. Mark expresses it more fully, by adding a contrast, that it was unlike the manner of teaching of *the Scribes* As they were false expounders of Scripture, their doctrine was literal and dead, breathed nothing of the power of the Spirit, and was utterly destitute of majesty. The same kind of coldness may be now observed in the speculative theology of Popery. Those masters do indeed thunder out whatever they think proper in a sufficiently magisterial style; but as their manner of discoursing about divine things is so profane, that their controversies exhibit no traces of religion, what they bring forward is all affectation and mere drivelling: for the declaration of the Apostle Paul holds true, that *the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power,* (1 Corinthians 4:20.) In short, the Evangelists mean that, while the manner of teaching, which then prevailed, was so greatly degenerated and so extremely corrupted, that it did not impress the minds of men with any reverence for God, the preaching of Christ was eminently distinguished by the divine power of the Spirit, which procured for him the respect of his hearers. This is the *power,* or rather the majesty and *authority,* at which the people were astonished.

Luke 4:33. *A man having a spirit of an unclean devil. This* mode of expression, which Luke employs, conveys the idea, that the man was driven by the impulse of the devil. By the permission of God, Satan had seized the faculties of his soul in such a manner, as to drive him not only to speak, but to perform other movements, at his pleasure. And thus, when the *demoniacs* speak, the devils, who have received permission to tyrannise, speak in them and by them. The title, *Holy One of God,* was probably taken from a manner of speaking, which was, at that time, in ordinary and general use. The Messiah was so called, because he was to be distinguished and separated from all others, as endued with eminent grace, and as the Head of the whole Church.

344 "Mais pource que Satan ne pent endurer ceste vertue et puissance, aquelle il sait estre le destruire et ruiner, il voudroit bien que Christ se contenant d'un beau titre en l'air, se reposast, et se deportast de luy rien faire." — "But because Satan cannot endure that power and might, which he knows to be to destroy and ruin him, he would rather wish that Christ, satisfying himself with a fine title in the air, should take repose, and refrain from doing any thing to him.

345 "En la facon d'enseigner de Jesus Christ;" — "in Jesus Christ's manner of teaching."

Mark 1:26 *When the unclean spirit had torn him* Luke uses a milder phrase, *when the devil had thrown him down:* but they agree perfectly as to the meaning; for the design of both was to show, that the devil went out of the man in a violent manner. He threw down the unhappy man, as if he had intended to tear him: but Luke says that the attempt was unsuccessful; for *he hurt him nothing* Not that the attack was, in no degree whatever, attended by injury, or at least by some feeling of pain; but that the man was afterwards delivered from the devil, and restored to perfect health.

Luke 4:36. *And trembling came upon all* This is the result of the miracle. They are compelled to acknowledge that there is in Christ something more than man, and justly trace the glory and power of the miracle to his doctrine. *What speech is this,* they say, which even the devils themselves are forced to obey?

Mark 1:27 *What new doctrine is this?* They call it *new* doctrine, not by way of reproach, but as an acknowledgment, that there was something in it unusual and extraordinary. It is not for the sake of blame, or to lessen its credit, that they speak of it as *new.* This is rather a part of their admiration, that they pronounce it to be not common or ordinary. Their only fault lies in this, that they remain in their state of hesitation,[346] whereas the children of God ought to make increasing progress.

346 "En leur doute et estonnement." — "In their doubt and astonishment."

MATTHEW 8:14-18; MARK 1:29-39; LUKE 4:38-44

Matthew 8:14-18	Mark 1:29-39	Luke 4:38-44
14. And when Jesus had come into Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying in bed, and afflicted with fever. **15**. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she arose and waited on them. **16**. And when the evening had approached, they brought to him many demoniacs, and he cast out the spirits by his word, and healed all that were diseased: **17**. That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, when he saith, He hath taken our diseases. **18**. And when Jesus had seen great multitudes around him, he commanded that they should depart to the other side.	**29**. And immediately going out of the synagogue, they came, with James and John, into the house of Simon and Andrew. **30**. And Simon's mother-in-law lay afflicted with fever and immediately they speak to him about her. **31**. And approaching, he raised her, by taking her hand, and the fever immediately left her, and she waited on them. **32**. And in the evening, when the sun had set, they brought to him all who were diseased, and who were possessed by devils. **33**. And the whole city was assembled at the door. **34**. And hehealed many that were ill of various diseases, and cast out many devils: and he did not permit the devils to say that they knew him. **35**. And in the morning, while it was still very dark, Jesus, when he had risen, went out, and departed into a desert place, and there prayed. **36**. And Simon followed him, as also those who were with him. **37**. And when they had found him, they said to him, All seek thee. **38**. And he saith to them, Let	**38**. And when Jesus had risen out of the synagogue, he entered into Simon's house. And Simon's mother-in-law was held by a great fever, and they besought him for her. **39**. And standing over her, he rebuked the fever, and the fever left her: and immediately rising, she waited on them. **40**. And when the sun was setting, all, who had persons laboring under various diseases, brought them to him: and he, laying hands upon each, healed them. **41**. And the devils went out of many, crying and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God. And, rebuking, he did not permit them to speak those things, that they knew that he was Christ. **42**. And when it was day, going out, he went into a desert place, and multitudes sought him: and came even to him, and held him, that he might not depart from them. **43**. To whom he saith, I must also preach the kingdom of God in other cities: for on this account am I sent. **44**. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.

	us go into the adjoining villages, that I preach there also: for on this account I came out. **39**. And he preached in their synagogues in all Galilee, and cast out devils.	

Mark 1:29. *They came, with James and John, into the house of Simon and Andrew.* There is reason to conjecture, that Matthew does not relate this history in its proper order: for Mark expressly states, that there were only four disciples who attended Christ. Besides, when he left the synagogue, he went straight to Peter's house; which also shows clearly, that Matthew did not observe, with exactness, the order of time. The Evangelists appear to have taken particular notice of this miracle; not that, in itself, it was more remarkable, or more worthy of being recorded, than other miracles, — but because, by means of it, Christ gave to his disciples a private and familiar illustration of his grace. Another reason was, that the healing of one woman gave occasion to many miracles, so that they came to him in great numbers, from every direction, to implore his assistance. A single word, in Luke's narrative, presents to us more strikingly the power which Christ displayed; for he says, that *Simon's mother-in-law was held by a GREAT fever.* It was a clearer and more affecting proof of divine power, that, in a moment, and by a single touch, he removed a strong and violent disease. He might have done it by the slightest expression of his will; but he *touched her hand,* (Matthew 8:15,) either to mark his affection, or because he was aware that this sign was, at that time, advantageous: for we know, that he freely used outward signs, when the time required them.

Luke 4:39. *He rebuked the fever.* To a person not well acquainted with Scripture this mode of expression may appear harsh; but there were good reasons for employing it. *Fevers* and other diseases, famine, pestilence, and calamities of every description, are God's heralds,[347] by whom he executes his judgments. Now, as he is said to send such messengers by his command and pleasure, so he also restrains and recalls them whenever he pleases. The manner in which he healed them is not mentioned by Matthew and Mark: but Luke says, that it was by *laying hands on each of them.* Under the Law, this was a sign of reconciliation; and, therefore, it was not improperly, or unseasonably, that Christ *laid hands* on those whom he freed from the curse of God. It was also a solemn rite of consecration, as will afterwards be more fully explained. But I interpret Christ's *laying hands* on the sick, as meaning simply, that he recommended them to the Father, and thus obtained for them grace and deliverance from their diseases.

347 "Les sergens de Dieu;" — "God's bailiffs."

Matthew 8:17. *That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet.* This prediction has the appearance of being inappropriate, and even of being tortured into a meaning which it does not bear: for Isaiah does not there speak of miracles, but of the death of Christ, — and not of temporal benefits, but of spiritual and eternal grace. Now, what is undoubtedly spoken about the impurities of the soul, Matthew applies to bodily diseases. The solution is not difficult, if the reader will only observe, that the Evangelist states not merely the benefit conferred by Christ on those sick persons, but the purpose for which he healed their diseases. They experienced in their bodies the grace of Christ, but we must look at the design: for it would be idle to confine our view to a transitory advantage, as if the Son of God were a physician of bodies. What then? He gave sight to the blind, in order to show that he is "the light of the world," (John 8:12.) He restored life to the dead, to prove that he is "the resurrection and the life," (John 11:25.) Similar observations might be made as to those who were lame, or had palsy. Following out this analogy, let us connect those benefits, which Christ bestowed on men in the flesh, with the design which is stated to us by Matthew, that he was sent by the Father, to relieve us from all evils and miseries.

Mark 1:34. *He did not permit the devils to speak.* There might be two reasons why *he did not permit* them: a general reason, because the time of the full revelation was not yet come; and a special reason, which we hinted at a little ago, that he refused to have, as heralds and witnesses of his divinity, those whose praise could have no other effect than to soil and injure his character. This latter reason is undoubtedly true: for he must have known, that the prince of death, and his agents, are in a state of irreconcileable enmity with the Author of eternal salvation and life.

Matthew 8:18 *And when Jesus had seen great multitudes about him.* Matthew, I have no doubt, touches briefly what the others explain in a more ample and copious narrative. The other two state a circumstance, which is not noticed by Matthew that Christ withdrew privately, for the sake of retirement, *into a desert place,* before it was daylight. Mark afterwards says, that Peter informed him, *all seek, thee;* and Luke says, that *multitudes* came to that place. Again, Matthew says, that *he passed over to the other side,* while the other two say, that he passed *through all Galilee,* to preach in every place. But *the other side,* or, *the farther bank,* (τὸ πέραν,) does not, I think, denote what was strictly the opposite side, but refers to that curvature of the lake, which was below Capernaum. In this way, he crossed over to another part of the lake, and yet did not go out of Galilee.

Mark1:38. *For on this account I came out.* **Luke 4:43.** *For on this account am I sent.* These words deserve our attention: for they contain a declaration of his earnest desire to fulfill his office. But it will perhaps be asked, is it better that the ministers of the Gospel should run here and there, to give only a slight and partial taste of it in each place, or that they should remain, and instruct perfectly the hearers whom they have once obtained? I reply. The design of Christ, which is here mentioned, was agreeable to the injunction and

call of the Father, and was founded on the best reasons. For it was necessary that Christ should travel, within a short period, throughout Judea, to awaken the minds of men, on all sides, as if by the sound of a trumpet, to hear the Gospel. But on this subject we must treat more fully under another passage.

MARK 3:13-19; LUKE 6:12-19

Mark 3:13-19	Luke 6:12-19
13. And he went up into a mountain, and called to him whom he would: and they came to him. **14**. And he appointed twelve to be with him, and send them forth to preach, **15**. And to have powers of healing diseases, and of casting out devils. **16**. And to Simon he gave the name Peter. **17**. And James th son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James: and he gave them the names of Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder. **18**. And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James (son) of Alpheus, and Thaddeus, and Simon the Canaanite, **19**. And Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.	**12**. And it happened in those days, he went out into a mountain to pray, and he spent the whole night in prayer to God. **13**. And when it was day, he called his disciples, and chose twelve from among them, whom he also called Apostles: **14**. Simon, whom he also called Peter, and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, **15**. Matthew and Thomas, James (son) of Alpheus, and Simon, who is called Zelotes, **16**. And Judas (brother) of James, and Judas Iscariot, who also was the traitor. **17**. And going down with them, he stood in a plain, and a multitude of his disciples, and a very great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon. **18**. Who had come to hear him, and to be healed from their diseases, and those who were tormented by unclean spirits were healed. **19**. And the whole multitude sought to touch him, for virtue went out of him, and healed all.

Mark 3:13. *And he went up into a mountain.* By this election he does not yet ordain them to be *Apostles,* to enter immediately into the discharge of their office, but merely admits them to enjoy his private instructions[348] with a view to the apostleship. Commentators have fallen into a mistake here, by confounding those passages with the tenth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew. For the plain meaning of the words is, that they are only destined to a future commission, the bestowal of which is recorded by Matthew; and Mark and Luke will be found afterwards relating, in its proper place, the mission which Matthew there describes. And we need not wonder, if their heavenly Master chose to train and accustom them gradually to so arduous an employment: for, even by a long course of instruction, their ignorance could not be corrected.

348 "Pour ses disciples et escoliers domestiques;" — "for his disciples and private scholars."

Both the Evangelists say, that Christ *went up into a mountain.* Luke explains the cause to have been, that he might *pray* with greater freedom in his retirement, which he was accustomed to do frequently, as is evident from other passages. Now, this example ought to be regarded by us as a perpetual rule, to begin with prayer, when we are about to choose pastors to churches: otherwise, what we attempt will not succeed well. And certainly our *Lord* prayed, not so much on his own account, as to lay down a rule for us. We are deficient in prudence and skill; and though our sagacity were of the highest order, nothing is more easy than to be deceived in this matter. Granting that we were in no danger of mistake, if the Lord does not regulate our affections, with what force, or rather violence, shall we be carried away[349] by favor and prepossession, or hatred or ambition? Besides, though the election were conducted in the very best manner, all will be unsuccessful, unless the Lord take under his guidance those who are elected, and furnish them with the necessary gifts. "What then?" it will be said, "did not Christ earnestly implore the Father to preside in the election?" This I readily acknowledge, and I have also to state, that this was a declaration and acknowledgment of his care for his Church. Accordingly, he did not pray to the Father in the ordinary manner, but *spent the whole night in prayer.* But if he, who was full of the Holy Spirit, (John 3:34,) implored the Father, with such ardor and earnestness, to preside in the election, how much greater need have we to do so?

He called to him whom he would. By this expression, I have no doubt, Mark conveys to us the instruction, that it was to the unmixed grace of Christ, and not to any excellence of their own, that they were indebted for receiving so honorable an office: for, if you understand him to say, that those were chosen, who were more excellent than others, this will not apply to Judas. The meaning, therefore, is the apostle-ship was not bestowed on account of any human merits; but, by the free mercy of God, persons, who were altogether unworthy of it, were raised to that high rank; and thus was fulfilled what Christ says on another occasion, "*Ye* have not chosen me, but I have chosen you," (John 15:16.) To the same effect Paul frequently speaks, extolling the purpose of God in bestowing on him the apostleship, (Ephesians 3:7; Colossians 1:25.)

But here many questions arise. *First*, why did our Lord deliberately choose Judas, who, he perfectly knew, was unworthy of the honor, and would be his betrayer? *Secondly*, why did God, after being so earnestly supplicated by his Son, and as if he had given a refusal to Christ, permit a base and wicked man to find his way to the highest rank in his Church?[350]

349 "Destournez et transportez hors du droit chemin;" — "turned and carried away out of the right road."

350 "Pourquoy Dieu estant prie et requis si ardemment par son Fils, asouffert qu'un mechant et mal-heureux traitre fust eleve au rang le plus honorable de son Eglise, comme si Jesus Christ n'eust point este exauce?" — "Why did God, when entreated and requested so earnestly by his Son, permit a wicked and unhappy traitor to be elevated to the most honorable rank in his Church, as if Jesus Christ had not been listened to?"

Thirdly, why did he resolve that the first-fruits[351] of his Church should be stained by so foul a disgrace? *Fourthly*, how came it, that Jesus Christ, knowingly and willingly, preferred Judas to honest and faithful ministers?

The first objection is met by the following reply. Our Lord expressly intended to prevent future offenses, that we may not feel excessive uneasiness, when unprincipled men occupy the situation of teachers in the Church, or when professors of the Gospel become apostates. He gave, at the same time, in the person of one man, an instance of fearful defection,[352] that those who occupy a higher rank may not indulge in self-complacency. At the same time, with regard to the second question, we do not admit that our Lord suffered a refusal.[353] This answer will serve also for the third question. At the very beginning, it was judged proper to give an early demonstration of the future state of the Church, that weak persons might not stumble on account of the fall of a reprobate; for it is not proper, that the stability of the Church should depend on men. With regard to the last objection, Christ did not prefer Judas to devout and holy disciples, but raised him to an eminence from which he was afterwards to fall, and thus intended to make him an example and instruction to men of every condition and of every age, that no one may abuse the honor which God has conferred upon him, and likewise that, when even the pillars fall, those who appear to be the weakest of believers may remain steady.

Luke 6:13. *Whom also he named Apostles.* This may be explained in two ways: either that, at a subsequent period, when he introduced them into their office, he gave them this name, — or that, with a view to their future rank, he bestowed on them this title, in order to inform them why they were separated from the ordinary class, and for what purpose they were destined. The latter view agrees well with the words of Mark: for he says, that Christ *appointed twelve to be with him, and to send them forth to preach. He* intended to make them his companions, that they might afterwards receive a higher rank: for, as I have already explained, when he says, *to be with him, and to send them forth to preach,* he does not mean that both were to take place at the same time.

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351 "Les premices et premier commencement de son Eglise;" — "the first-fruits and first beginning of his Church."

352 "Un revoltement et cheute horrible;" — "a dreadful rebellion and fall."

353 "Cependant nous ne dirons pas que Christ a este esconduit, veu que le pere par un conseil admirable, mettant un diable en la compagnie d'onze Anges, a toutesfois tellement modere l'issue, que la cheute de cestuy-la a plustost conferme que non pas esbranle la foyde son Eglise." — "Yet we will not say that Christ was refused, since the Father, by a wonderful purpose, putting a devil into the company of eleven angels, has, at the same time, so guided the result, that the fall of this man, instead of shaking, has rather confirmed, the faith of his Church."

Mark 3:16. *And to Simon he gave the name Peter.* Though all Christians must be living *stones*[354] , of the spiritual temple, yet Christ gave this name peculiarly to Simon, according to the measure of grace which he intended to bestow upon him. This is not inconsistent with the shameful weakness which he manifested in denying his Lord: for this title showed his invincible power and steadiness, which continued till his death. Yet it is absurd in the Papists to infer from this, that the Church is founded on him, as will afterwards be more fully explained, **(**Matthew 16:18**.)** Christ called the sons of Zebedee *sons of thunder,* because he was to give them a powerful voice, that they might *thunder* throughout the whole world. [355] And that thunder is heard, in the present day, from the mouth of John. As to his brother, there can be no doubt that, so long as he lived, he shook the earth. The word has been corrupted: for the full pronunciation would be ⊠⊠ ⊠⊠, *(Benae-regesh;)*[356] but the changes which words undergo in passing into other languages are well known.

354 This alludes to the Greek word Πέτρος, *(Peter,)* which literally signifies *a stone.* We shall afterwards find (Matthew 16:18) that our Lord makes express reference to the meaning of the name. — *Ed.*

355 "Afin qu'ils tonnassent par tout le monde en preschant;" — "in order that they might thunder throughout the whole world in preaching."

356 Philologists have been a good deal perplexed by this word. There is even some difficulty in settling the Greek orthography: for conflicting manuscripts present us with the various forms of Βοανηργές, Βοανεργής, and Βοανεργείς. The name is unquestionably of Hebrew origin. Some of the derivations, which have been given, are so far-fetched as not to deserve refutation. There is plausibility in Jerome's hypothesis, that it comes from ⊠⊠, (Ragam,) *thunder.* But the substitution of final, ς for μ has never been satisfactorily explained. Admitting that ές or ής, is a Greek termination, the absence of the final and radical *Mem* (⊠) is too violent a supposition. After many trials, scholars are pretty nearly agreed, that they must return to the derivation which is suggested by our author, and which some writers have illustrated and defended by a considerable array of learning. — *Ed.*

MATTHEW 5:1-12; LUKE 6:20-26

Matthew 5:1-12	Luke 6:20-26
1. And when Jesus had seen the multitudes, [357] he went up into a mountain, and when he had sat down, his disciples approached to him. **2**. And opening his mouth, [358] he taught them, saying, **3**. Happy are the poor in spirit: for their is the kingdom of heaven. **4**. Happy are they who mourn: for they shall receive consolation. **5**. Happy are the meek: for they shall receive the earth by inheritance. [359] **6**. Happy are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be satisfied. **7**. Happy are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. [360] **8**. Happy are those who are of a pure heart: for they shall see God. **9**. Happy are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God. **10**. Happy are those who suffer persecution on account of righteousness: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11**. Happy are you, when they shall throw reproaches on you, and shall persecute you, and lying, shall speak every evil word against you on my account. **12**. Rejoice ye, and leap for joy: for your reward is great in heaven: for so did they persecute the prophets who were before you.	**20**. And he, lifting up his eyes on the disciples, said, Happy (are ye) poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. **21**. Happy are ye who hunger now: for ye shall be satisfied. Happy are ye who weep now: for ye shall laugh. **22**. Happy shall ye be when men shall hate you, and shall separate you, and shall load you with reproaches, and shall cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man. **23**. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, lo, your reward is great in heaven: for according to these things their fathers did to the prophets. **24**. But woe to you (who are) rich: for you have your consolation. **25**. Woe to you who are filled: for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now: for ye shall mourn and weep. **26**. Woe to you, when all men shall applaud you: for according to these things their fathers did to the false prophets.

Matthew 5:1. *He went up into a mountain.* Those who think that Christ's sermon, which is here related, is different from the sermon contained in the sixth chapter of Luke's Gospel, rest their opinion on a very light and frivolous argument. Matthew states, that Christ spoke

357 "Jesus donques royant la foulle;" — "Jesus then seeing the crowd."

358 "Et luy apres avoir ourerr sa bouche, les enseignoit." — "And he, after having opened his mouth, taught them."

359 "Car ils possederont la terre." — "For they shall possess the earth."

360 "Car misericorde leur sera faite." — "For mercy shall be shown to them."

to his disciples on a mountain, while Luke seems to say, that the discourse was delivered on a plain. But it is a mistake to read the words of Luke, *he went down with them, and stood in the plain,* (Luke 6:17,) as immediately connected with the statement that, *lifting up his eyes on the disciples,* he spoke thus. For the design of both Evangelists was, to collect into one place the leading points of the doctrine of Christ, which related to a devout and holy life. Although Luke had previously mentioned a *plain,* he does not observe the immediate succession of events in the history, but passes from miracles to doctrine, without pointing out either time or place: just as Matthew takes no notice of the time, but only mentions the place. It is probable, that this discourse was not delivered until Christ had chosen the twelve: but in attending to the order of time, which I saw that the Spirit of God had disregarded, I did not wish to be too precise. Pious and modest readers ought to be satisfied with having a brief summary of the doctrine of Christ placed before their eyes, collected out of his many and various discourses, the first of which was that in which he spoke to his disciples about true happiness.

2. *Opening his mouth.* This redundancy of expression (πλεονασμὸς) partakes of the Hebrew idiom: for what would be faulty in other languages is frequent among the Hebrews, to say, *He opened his mouth,* instead of, *He began to speak.* Many look upon it as an emphatic mode of expression, employed to draw attention to any thing important and remarkable, either in a good or bad sense, which has been uttered: but as some passages of Scripture countenance an opposite view, I prefer the former exposition. I shall also dismiss the ingenious speculation of those, who give an allegorical turn to the fact of our Lord teaching his disciples on a mountain, as if it had been intended to teach them to elevate their minds far above worldly cares and employments. In ascending the mountain, his design rather was to seek a retreat, where he might obtain relaxation for himself and his disciples at a distance from the multitude.

Now let us see, in the first place, why Christ spoke to his disciples about *true happiness.* We know that not only the great body of the people, but even the learned themselves, hold this error, that he is the happy man who is free from annoyance, attains all his wishes, and leads a joyful and easy life. At least it is the general opinion, that happiness ought to be estimated from the present state.[361] Christ, therefore, in order to accustom his own people to bear the cross, exposes this mistaken opinion, that those are happy who lead an easy and prosperous life according to the flesh. For it is impossible that men should mildly bend the neck to bear calamities and reproaches, so long as they think that patience is at variance with a happy life. The only consolation which mitigates and even sweetens the bitterness of the cross and of all afflictions, is the conviction, that we are happy in the midst of miseries: for our patience is *blessed* by the Lord, and will soon be followed by a happy result.

361 "Par l'estat de la vie presente;" — "by the state of the present life."

This doctrine, I do acknowledge, is widely removed from the common opinion: but the disciples of Christ must learn the philosophy of placing their happiness beyond the world, and above the affections of the flesh. Though carnal reason will never admit what is here taught by Christ, yet he does not bring forward any thing imaginary, — as the Stoics[362] were wont, in ancient times, to amuse themselves with their paradoxes, — but demonstrates from the fact, that those persons are truly happy, whose condition is supposed to be miserable. Let us, therefore remember, that the leading object of the discourse is to show, that those are not unhappy who are oppressed by the reproaches of the wicked, and subject to various calamities. And not only does Christ prove that they are in the wrong, who measure the happiness of man by the present state, because the distresses of the godly will soon be changed for the better; but he also exhorts his own people to patience, by holding out the hope of a reward.

3. *Happy are the poor in spirit.* **Luke 6:20.** *Happy (are ye) poor.* Luke gives nothing more than a simple metaphor: but as the poverty of many is accursed and unhappy, Matthew expresses more clearly the intention of Christ. Many are pressed down by distresses, and yet continue to swell inwardly with pride and cruelty. But Christ pronounces those to be happy who, chastened and subdued by afflictions, submit themselves wholly to God, and, with inward humility, betake themselves to him for protection. Others explain *the poor in spirit* to be those who claim nothing for themselves, and are even so completely emptied of confidence in the flesh, that they acknowledge their poverty. But as the words of Luke and those of Matthew must have the same meaning, there can be no doubt that the appellation *poor* is here given to those who are pressed and afflicted by adversity. The only difference is, that Matthew, by adding an epithet, confines the happiness to those only who, under the discipline of the cross, have learned to be humble.

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. We see that Christ does not swell the minds of his own people by any unfounded belief, or harden them by unfeeling obstinacy, as the Stoics do, but leads them to entertain the hope of eternal life, and animates them to patience by assuring them, that in this way they will pass into the heavenly kingdom of God. It deserves our attention, that he only who is reduced to nothing in himself, and relies on the mercy of God, is *poor in spirit:* for they who are broken or overwhelmed by despair murmur against God, and this proves them to be of a proud and haughty *spirit.*

362 *Stoics* were an ancient sect of philosophers, and received their name from the *Stoa,* (στοὰ,) or *portico,* in which *Zeno,* their master, delivered his instructions. The *paradoxes* referred to by Calvin are such as the following: that the distinction between pleasure and pain is imaginary; that happiness does not at all depend on outward circumstances; and that whoever chooses to acquire an absolute command over his passions may make himself perfectly happy in the present life. — *Ed.*

4. *Happy are they that mourn.* This statement is closely connected with the preceding one, and is a sort of appendage or confirmation of it. The ordinary belief is, that calamities render a man unhappy. This arises from the consideration, that they constantly bring along with them *mourning* and grief. Now, nothing is supposed to be more inconsistent with happiness than *mourning.* But Christ does not merely affirm that *mourners* are not unhappy. He shows, that their very *mourning* contributes to a *happy* life, by preparing them to receive eternal joy, and by furnishing them with excitements to seek true *comfort* in God alone. Accordingly, Paul says,

"We glory in tribulations also knowing that tribulation produces patience, and patience experience, and experience hope: and hope maketh not ashamed," (Romans 5:3-5.)

5. *Happy are the meek* By *the meek* he means persons of mild and gentle dispositions, who are not easily provoked by injuries, who are not ready to take offense, but are prepared to endure anything rather than do the like actions to wicked men. When Christ promises to such persons *the inheritance of the earth,* we might think it exceedingly foolish. Those who warmly repel any attacks, and whose hand is ever ready to revenge injuries, are rather the persons who claim for themselves the dominion of the earth. And experience certainly shows that, the more mildly their wickedness is endured, the more bold and insolent does it become. Hence arises the diabolical proverb, that "We must howl with the wolves, because the wolves will immediately devour every one who makes himself a sheep." But Christ places his own protection, and that of the Father, in contrast with the fury and violence of wicked men, and declares, on good grounds, that *the meek* will be the lords and *heirs of the earth* The children of this world never think themselves safe, but when they fiercely revenge the injuries that are done them, and defend their life by the "weapons of war," (Ezekiel 32:27.) But as we must believe, that Christ alone is the guardian of our life, all that remains for us is to "hide ourselves under the shadow of his wings," (Psalm 17:8.) We must be sheep, if we wish to be reckoned a part of his flock.

It will perhaps be objected, that what has been now said is contradicted by experience. I would first suggest that it be considered, how greatly ferocious[363] people are disturbed by their own restlessness. While they lead so stormy a life, though they were a hundred times lords of the earth, while they possess all, they certainly possess nothing. For the children of God, on the other hand, I answer, that though they may not plant their foot on what is their own, they enjoy a quiet residence on the earth. And this is no imaginary possession;[364] for they know, that the earth, which they inhabit, has been granted to them by God. Besides, the hand of God is interposed to protect them against the violence and fury of wicked men. Though exposed to every species of attack, subject to the malice of wicked men, surrounded

363 "Les gens fiers et farouches;" — "proud and ferocious people.

364 "Ce nest as une possession lma name et en l'air." — "It is not an imaginary possession, and in the air."

by all kinds of danger, they are safe under the divine protection. They have already a foretaste, at least, of this grace of God; and that is enough for them, till they enter, at the last day, into the possession of the *inheritance*[365] of the world.

6. *Happy are they who hunger* To *hunger and thirst* is here, I think, used as a figurative expression,[366] and means to suffer poverty, to want the necessaries of life, and even to be defrauded of one's right. Matthew says, *who thirst after righteousness,* and thus makes one class stand for all the rest. He represents more strongly the unworthy treatment which they have received, when he says that, though they are anxious, though they groan, they desire nothing but what is proper. "Happy are they who, though their wishes are so moderate, that they desire nothing to be granted to them but what is reasonable, are yet in a languishing condition, like persons who are famishing with hunger." Though their distressing anxiety exposes them to the ridicule of others, yet it is a certain preparation for *happiness:* for at length *they shall be satisfied* God will one day listen to their groans, and satisfy their just desires for to Him, as we learn from the song of the Virgin, it belongs to *fill the hungry with good things,* (Luke 1:53.)

7. *Happy are the merciful* This paradox, too, contradicts the judgment of men.[367] The world reckons those men to be *happy,* who give themselves no concern about the distresses of others, but consult their own ease. Christ says that those are *happy,* who are not only prepared to endure their own afflictions, but to take a share in the afflictions of others, — who assist the wretched, — who willingly take part with those who are in distress, — who clothe themselves, as it were, with the same affections, that they may be more readily disposed to render them assistance. He adds, *for they shall obtain mercy,* — not only with God, but also among men, whose minds God will dispose to the exercise of humanity.[368] Though the whole world may sometimes be ungrateful, and may return the very worst reward to those who have done acts of kindness to them, it ought to be reckoned enough, that grace is laid up with God for the merciful and humane, so that they, in their turn, will find him to be *gracious and merciful,* (Psalm 103:8; 145:8.)

8. *Happy are they who are of a pure heart* We might be apt to think, that what is here stated by Christ is in accordance with the judgment of all. *Purity of heart* is universally acknowledged to be the mother of all virtues. And yet there is hardly one person in a hundred, who does not put craftiness in the place of the greatest virtue. Hence those persons are

365 "De la seigneurie de tout le monde;" — "of the lordships of all the world."

366 "Par une figure qu'on appelle *Synecdoche;*" — "by a figure which is called *Synecdoche,*" in which a part is put for the whole.

367 "Ceci aussi est un paradoxe, c'est a dire, une sentence contraire au jugement commun des hommes." — "This also is a paradox, that is to say, a sentiment contrary to the general opinion of men."

368 "A douceur et compassion;" — "to mildness and compass

commonly accounted *happy,* whose ingenuity is exercised in the successful practice of deceit, who gain dexterous advantages, by indirect means, over those with whom they have intercourse. Christ does not at all agree with carnal reason, when he pronounces those to be *happy,* who take no delight in cunning, but converse sincerely with men, and express nothing, by word or look, which they do not feel in their heart. Simple people are ridiculed for want of caution, and for not looking sharply enough to themselves. But Christ directs them to higher views, and bids them consider that, if they have not sagacity to deceive in this world, they will enjoy *the sight of God* in heaven.

9. *Happy are the peacemakers* By *peacemakers* he means those who not only seek peace and avoid quarrels, as far as lies in their power, but who also labor to settle differences among others, who advise all men to live at peace, and take away every occasion of hatred and strife. There are good grounds for this statement. As it is a laborious and irksome employment to reconcile those who are at variance, persons of a mild disposition, who study to promote peace, are compelled to endure the indignity of hearing reproaches, complaints, and remonstrances on all sides. The reason is, that every one would desire to have advocates, who would defend his cause. That we may not depend on the favor of men, Christ bids us look up to the judgment of his Father, who is *the God of peace,* (Romans 15:33,) and who accounts us his children, while we cultivate peace, though our endeavors may not be acceptable to men: for *to be called* means *To Be Accounted the children of God*

10. *Happy are they who suffer persecution* The disciples of Christ have very great need of this instruction; and the more hard and disagreeable it is for the flesh to admit it, the more earnestly ought we to make it the subject of our meditation. We cannot be Christ's soldiers[369] on any other condition, than to have the greater part of the world rising in hostility against us, and pursuing us even to death. The state of the matter is this. Satan, the prince of the world, will never cease to fill his followers with rage, to carry on hostilities against the members of Christ. It is, no doubt, monstrous and unnatural, that men, who study to live a righteous life, should be attacked and tormented in a way which they do not deserve. And so Peter says,

> "Who is he that will harm you,
> if ye be followers of that which is good?"
> (1 Peter 3:13.)

Yet, in consequence of the unbridled wickedness of the world, it too frequently happens, that good men, through a zeal of righteousness, arouse against them the resentments of the ungodly. Above all, it is, as we may say, the ordinary lot of Christians to be hated by the

369 "Nous ne pouvons pas batailler sons l'enseigne de Jesus Christ a autre condition." — "We cannot fight under the banner of Jesus Christ on any other condition."

majority of men: for the flesh cannot endure the doctrine of the Gospel; none can endure to have their vices reproved.

Who suffer on account of righteousness This is descriptive of those who inflame the hatred, and provoke the rage, of wicked men against them, because, through an earnest desire to do what is good and right, they oppose bad causes and defend good ones, as far as lies in their power. Now, in this respect, the truth of God justly holds the first rank. Accordingly, by this mark Christ distinguishes his own martyrs from criminals and malefactors.

I now return to what I said a little before, that as, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus "(Paul informs us), shall suffer persecution," (2 Timothy 3:12,) this admonition has a general reference to all the godly. But if, at any time, the Lord spares our weakness, and does not permit the ungodly to torment us as they would desire, yet, during the season of repose and leisure, it is proper for us to meditate on this doctrine, that we may be ready, whenever it shall be necessary, to enter the field, and may not engage in the contest till we have been well prepared. As the condition of the godly, during the whole course of this life, is very miserable, Christ properly calls them to the hope of the heavenly life. And here lies the main difference between Christ's paradox and the ravings of the Stoics, who ordered that every man should be satisfied in his own mind, and should be the author of his own happiness: while Christ does not suspend our happiness on a vain imagination, but rests it on the hope of a future reward.

11. *When they shall cast reproaches on you* **Luke 6:22** *When men shall hate you, and separate you, and load you with reproaches, and cast out your name as evil* By these words Christ intended to comfort those who believe in him; that they may not lose courage, even though they see themselves to be detestable in the eyes of the world. For this was no light temptation, to be thrown out of the Church as ungodly and profane. Christ knew that there is no class of men more envenomed than hypocrites, and foresaw with what furious madness the enemies of the Gospel would attack his small and despised flock. It was therefore his will to furnish them with a sure defense, that they might not give way, though an immense mass of reproaches were ready to overwhelm them. And hence it appears, how little reason there is to dread the excommunication of the Pope, when those tyrants banish us from their synagogues, because we are unwilling to renounce Christ.

12. *Rejoice ye, and leap for joy* The meaning is, a remedy is at hand, that we may not be overwhelmed by unjust reproaches: for, as soon as we raise our minds to heaven, we there behold vast grounds of joy, which dispel sadness. The idle reasonings of the Papists, about the word *reward,* which is here used, are easily refuted: for there is not (as they dream) a mutual relation between the reward and merit, but the promise of the *reward* is free. Besides, if we consider the imperfections and faults of any good works that are done by the very best of men, there will be no work which God can judge to be worthy of reward.

We must advert once more to the phrases, *on my account,* or, *on account of the Son of Man,* (Luke 6:22;) and *lying, shall speak every evil word against you;* that he who suffers persecution for his own fault (1 Peter 2:20) may not forthwith boast that he is a martyr of Christ, as the Donatists, in ancient times, were delighted with themselves on this single ground, that the magistrates were against them. And in our own day the Anabaptists,[370] while they disturb the Church by their ravings, and slander the Gospel, boast that they are carrying the banners of Christ, when they are justly condemned. But Christ pronounces those only to be happy who are employed in defending a righteous cause.

For so did they persecute This was expressly added, that the apostles might not expect to triumph without exertion and without a contest, and might not fail, when they encountered persecutions. The restoration of all things, under the reign of Christ, being everywhere promised in Scripture, there was danger, lest they might not think of warfare, but indulge in vain and proud confidence. It is evident from other passages, that they foolishly imagined the kingdom of Christ to be filled with wealth and luxuries.[371] Christ had good reason for warning them, that, as soon as they succeeded to the place of the prophets, they must sustain the same contests in which the prophets were formerly engaged. *The prophets who were before you* This means not only, that *the prophets were before them* with respect to the order of time, but that they were of the same class with themselves, and ought therefore to be followed as their example. The notion commonly entertained, of making out nine distinct beatitudes, is too frivolous to need a long refutation.

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370 *The Anabaptists* here named must not be confounded with the *Baptists* or *Anti-poedo-baptists* of the present day, who are, indeed, at issue with Calvin as to the subjects and mode of baptism, but who utterly disown the *Anabaptists* of the sixteenth century. Our notes are restricted by the plan of this work to the elucidation of our author, and to matters of criticism and history. It would, therefore, be out of place to enter here into the merits of a doctrinal controversy, or to vindicate brethren from the heavy charge which is here implied. But we are at liberty to say, that against them Calvin brings no such charge. Nowhere does he represent a departure from his views on the ordinance of Baptism as a fundamental error, or as necessarily connected with danger to society. He alludes to sentiments, which were openly avowed by the *Anabaptists,* and which he viewed as striking at the root of civil government. To any one at all conversant with their history, the name instantly awakens the recollections of *Munster,* and of the enormities which were perpetrated there, to the disgrace of the Christian name, — enormities which none are more ready to condemn than the esteemed brethren to whom we have referred. If we seem to discover excessive solicitude to remove the appearance of calumny, our apology must be found in our deep veneration for the author, and in our conviction that he was not less distinguished by a Catholic spirit than by the other great excellencies of his character. Never was there a human breast, in which there dwelt a stronger affection for all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. — *Ed.*

371 "Plein de richesses, magnificences, et delices terriennes;" — "full of riches, magnificence, and earthly luxuries."

Luke 6:24. *Woe to you that are rich.* As Luke has related not more than four kinds of *blessings,* so he now contrasts with them four *curses,* so that the clauses mutually correspond. This contrast not only tends to strike terror into the ungodly, but to arouse believers, that they may not be lulled to sleep by the vain and deceitful allurements of the world. We know how prone men are to be intoxicated by prosperity, or ensnared by flattery; and on this account the children of God often envy the reprobate, when they see everything go on prosperously and smoothly with them.

He pronounces a curse on the *rich*, — not on all the rich, but on those who *receive their consolation* in the world; that is, who are so completely occupied with their worldly possessions, that they forget the life to come. The meaning is: riches are so far from making a man happy, that they often become the means of his destruction. In any other point of view, the rich are not excluded from the kingdom of heaven, provided they do not become snares for themselves, or fix their hope on the earth, so as to shut against them the kingdom of heaven. This is finely illustrated by Augustine, who, in order to show that riches are not in themselves a hindrance to the children of God, reminds his readers that poor Lazarus was received into the bosom of rich Abraham.

25. *Woe to you who are filled. Woe to you who laugh now* In the same sense, he pronounces a curse on those who are *satiated and full:* because they are lifted up by confidence in the blessings of the present life, and reject those blessings which are of a heavenly nature. A similar view must be taken of what he says about *laughter:* for by those who *laugh* he means those who have given themselves up to Epicurean mirth, who are plunged in carnal pleasures, and spurn every kind of trouble which would be found necessary for maintaining the glory of God.

26. *Woe to you when all men shall applaud you* The last woe is intended to correct ambition: for nothing is more common than to seek the applauses of men, or, at least, to be carried away by them; and, in order to guard his disciples against such a course, he points out to them that the favor of men would prove to be their ruin. This warning refers peculiarly to teachers, who have no plague more to be dreaded than ambition: because it is impossible for them not to corrupt the pure doctrine of God, when they, "seek to please men," (Galatians 1:10.) By the phrase, *all men,* Christ must be understood to refer to the children of the world, whose applauses are wholly bestowed on deceivers and false prophets: for faithful and conscientious ministers of sound doctrine enjoy the applause and favor of good men. It is only the wicked favor of the flesh that is here condemned: for, as Paul informs us, (Galatians 1:10,) no man who "seeks to please men" can be "the servant of Christ."

MATTHEW 5:13-16; MARK 9:49-50; 4:21;
LUKE 14:34-35; 8:16; 11:33

Matthew 5:13-16	Mark 9:49-50	Luke 14:34-35
13. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if salt shall become tasteless, [372] with what shall it be salted? [373] It is good for nothing farther, than to be thrown out and trodden down by men. **14**. Ye are the light of the world: a city placed upon a mountain cannot be hid. **15**. Neither do men light a candle, and put it upon a bushel but upon a candlestick, and it gives light to all who are in the house. **16**. Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works, and may glorify your Father who is in heaven.	**49**. For every (man) shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. **50**. Salt is a good thing: but if salt shall become tasteless, with what shall it be seasoned? Have salt in yourselves, and cultivate peace with one another. Mark 4:21 **21**. And he said to them, Is a candle lighted, that it may be put under a bushel, or under a bed? Is it not that it may be put on a candlestick?	**34**. Salt is good: but if salt shall have become tasteless, with what shall it be seasoned? **35**. It is not useful either for the land [374] or for the dunghill: they throw it out. He who hath ears to hear, let him hear. Luke 8:16 **16**. And no man, when he hath lighted a candle, covered it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed, but putteth it on a candlestick, that those who enter may see the light. Luke 11:33 **33**. No man lighteth a candle, and putteth it in a hidden place, nor under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that those who enter may see the light.

Matthew 5:13. Ye *are the salt of the earth.* What belongs to doctrine is applied to the persons to whom the administration of it has been committed. When Christ calls the apostles *the salt of the earth,* he means, that it is their office *to salt the earth:* because men have nothing in them but what is tasteless, till they have been seasoned with the salt of heavenly

372 *"Ou, s'evente;" — "or, is spoiled."*

373 *"Ou, luy rendra-on sa saveur?" — "or, shall its taste be restored to it?"* (Leviticus 2:13.)

374 "Il n'est propre ne (pour mettre) en la terre, ni au fumier." — "It is not fit either (to put) on the land, nor on the dunghill."

doctrine. After having reminded them to what they are called, he pronounces against them a heavy and dreadful judgment, if they do not fulfill their duty. The doctrine, which has been entrusted to them, is shown to be so closely connected with a good conscience and a devout and upright life, that the corruption, which might be tolerated in others, would in them be detestable and monstrous. "If other men are tasteless in the sight of God, to you shall be given the salt which imparts a relish to them: but if you have lost your taste, where shall you obtain the remedy which you ought to supply to others?"

Our Lord skillfully pursues his metaphor, by saying, that other things when they lose their original qualities, are still useful after they have become corrupted: but that *salt* becomes even hurtful, and communicates barrenness even to *dunghills.*[375] The amount of his statement is, that it is an incurable disease, when the ministers and teachers of the word corrupt and render themselves tasteless: for they ought to season the rest of the world with their salt. This warning is useful, not only to ministers, but to the whole flock of Christ. Since it is the will of God that *the earth shall be salted* by his own word, it follows, that whatever is destitute of this salt is, in his estimation, tasteless, how much soever it may be relished by men. There is nothing better, therefore, than to receive the seasoning, by which alone our tastelessness is corrected. But, at the same time, let those whose business is to *salt* it beware lest they encourage the world in their own folly,[376] and still more, that they do not infect it with a depraved and vicious *taste.*

The wickedness of the Papists is therefore intolerable:[377] as if it had been the design of Christ, to allow the apostles unbounded liberty, and to make them tyrants of souls, instead of reminding them of their duty, that they might not swerve from the right path. Christ declares what sort of men he wishes the teachers of his Church to be. Those who, without any proper grounds, give themselves out to be apostles,[378] hide by this covering all the abominations which they are pleased to introduce; because Christ pronounced Peter, and his companions, to be *the salt of the earth.* They do not, at the same time, consider the sharp and severe reproof which is added, that, if they become *tasteless,* they are the worst of all.

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375 "Que le sel estant empire, ne fait mesmes que gaster tout, a quoi qu'on le mette, tellement qu'il corrompt mesmes les fumiers, et consume toute la grasse d'iceux." — "That salt, when it is decayed, does only spoil everything that it touches: so that it corrupts even dunghills, and consumes all their fatness."

376 "De ne nourrir le monde en sa folie et fadesse;" — "not to nourish the world in their folly and tastelessness."

377 "Et pourtant la malice des Papistes n'est aucunement a supporter, quand ils n'ont point de honte de couvrir de ces titres leurs Prelats mas-quez, afin que nul ne presume de rien reprendre en leurs personnes."— "And then the malice of the Papists is not at all to be endured, since they are not ashamed to cover with these titles their masked Prelates, that no one may presume to reprove any thing in their persons."

378 "Des gens qui se vantent a fausses enseignes de tenir le place des apostres." — "People who boast, under false colors, of holding the place of apostles."

This sentence is mentioned by Luke in an abrupt manner: but is introduced there for the same purpose as in this passage, so that it does not require a separate exposition.

Mark 9:49. *Every man shall be salted with fire.* I have connected these words of Mark with the passage in Matthew which we have just considered: not that I look upon them to have altogether the same meaning, or to have been spoken at the same place and time, but rather to enable the reader to understand better, by means of comparison, the different applications of the same sentence. According to Mark's narrative, our Lord, having spoken of eternal *fire,* (Mark 9:48,) exhorts his own people, on the contrary, to offer themselves now to God to be seasoned *with fire and salt,* that they may be devoted sacrifices,[379] and that they may not draw upon themselves, by their sins, that *fire* which is never extinguished. To be *salted with fire* is an incorrect phrase; but as *salt* and *fire* possess the same quality of purifying and refining, Christ applied the same term to both. Such was the occasion on which this sentiment was uttered. It was, that believers may not refuse to be purified by *fire* and *salt;* since, without this seasoning, they cannot be holy to God. He alludes to an enactment of the Law:

"Every oblation of thy meat-offering shalt thou season with salt, neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat-offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt,"

(Leviticus 2:13.)

But now he shows, that believers are salted by the word of the Gospel, that they may be sanctified.

He next adds, *salt is good* This extends generally to all, whom God has once been pleased to season with his own word. He exhorts them to retain always their savor. To give the name of *salt* to what is *salted* is rather a harsh metaphor, but it creates no doubt as to the meaning. When men have lost, by their carelessness, that savor which they obtained by the grace of God, there is no farther remedy. Those who lose their faith, by which they were consecrated to God, and become without savor, are in a desperate condition: for the good savor cannot be acquired by any other seasoning. Besides, those who have become corrupted, by making void the grace of God, are worse than unbelievers, as *salt* spoils *the land* and the *dunghill*

Mark 9:50. *Have salt in yourselves* This word may be taken in a different sense from what it had in the former verse, as meaning that seasoning of good odor, which is obtained by faith, or rather the wisdom of the Spirit. When Paul enjoins, "Let your speech be always with grace, *seasoned with salt,"* (Colossians 4:6,) he means, that we ought to be holy, and purified from all profane follies and corruptions, and filled with spiritual grace, which edifies all who hear it, and diffuses over them its sweet odor. If this exposition is adopted, it may be necessary to understand the latter clause as referring to the mutual peace, which is pro-

379 "Sacrifices ou offrandes sacrees;" — "sacrifices or sacred offerings."

moted by that salt. Yet, as it is more probable, that this last sentence depends on the former discourse, I think that Christ is exhorting his own people to maintain the rigor of faith, which may serve also to purify others. "You must do your endeavor, not only to be *salted within,* but likewise to *salt* others." But as salt bites by its sharpness, he immediately admonishes them to regulate the seasoning in such a manner, that *peace* may be preserved entire *with one another*

Matthew 5:14 *Ye are the light of the world* We are all the children of light, after having been enlightened by faith, and are commanded to carry in our hands "burning lamps," (that we may not wander in darkness,) and even to point out to others the way of life, (Luke 12:35.) But, as the preaching of the Gospel was committed to the apostles above others, and is now committed to the pastors of the Church, this designation is given to them, in a peculiar manner, by Christ. "They are placed in this rank on the condition, that they shall shine, as from an elevated situation, on all others."

He subjoins two comparisons. *A city placed on a mountain cannot be concealed;* and *a candle,* when it has been lighted, is *not usually concealed,* (verse 15.) This means, that they ought to live in such a manner, as if the eyes of all were upon them.[380] And certainly, the more eminent a person is, the more injury he does by a bad example, if he acts improperly. Christ, therefore, informs the apostles, that they must be more careful to live a devout and holy life, than unknown persons of the common rank, because the eyes of all are directed to them, as to lighted *candles;* and that they must not be endured, if their devotion, and uprightness of conduct, do not correspond to the doctrine of which they are ministers. Mark and Luke appear to apply the comparison in a different manner: for there Christ gives a general admonition, that they ought to take particular care, lest any one, trusting to the darkness, indulge freely in sin, because what is hidden for a time will afterwards be revealed. But perhaps the discourses related by both of them are detached from the immediate context.

16. *Let your light shine before men* After having taught the apostles that, in consequence of the rank in which they are placed, both their vices and their virtues are better known for a good or bad example, he now enjoins them so to regulate their life, as to excite all to glorify God. *That they may see your good works:* for, as Paul tells us, believers must,

> "provide for honest things, not only in the sight of God,
> but also in the sight of men," (2 Corinthians 8:21.)

The command, which he gives shortly afterwards, to seek concealment and a retired situation for their good works, (Matthew 6:4,) is intended only to forbid ostentation. In the present instance, he has quite a different object in view, to recommend to them the glory of God alone. Now, if the glory of good works cannot be properly ascribed to God, unless they are traced to him, and unless he is acknowledged to be their only Author, it is evident,

380 "Comme si tout le monde les regardoit;" — "as if every body were looking at them."

that we cannot, without offering an open and gross insult to God, extol free will, as if good works proceeded wholly, or in part, from its power. Again, we must observe, how graciously God deals with us, when he calls the good works *ours,* the entire praise of which would justly be ascribed to himself.

MATTHEW 5:17-19; LUKE 16:17

Matthew 5:17-19	Luke 16:17
17. Think not that I am come to destroy [381] the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. **18**. Verily, I say to you, Till heaven and earth pass, one iota or one point [382] shall not pass from the Law, till all are fulfilled. **19**. Whoever then shall break on of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whoever shall have done and taught them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.	**17**. Now it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one point of the law to fail.

Matthew 5:17. *Think not.* With regard to the perfection of his life, Christ might justly have maintained that he *came to fulfill the law:* but here he treats of doctrine, not of life. As he afterwards exclaimed, that "*the kingdom of God is come*," (Matthew 12:28,) and raised the minds of men with unusual expectation, and even admitted disciples by baptism, it is probable, that the minds of many were in a state of suspense and doubt, and were eagerly inquiring, what was the design of that novelty. Christ, therefore, now declares, that his doctrine is so far from being at variance with *the law,* that it agrees perfectly with *the law and the prophets,* and not only so, but brings the complete *fulfillment* of them.

There appear to have been chiefly two reasons, which induced him to declare this agreement between *the law* and the Gospel. As soon as any new method of teaching makes its appearance, the body of the people immediately look upon it, as if everything were to be overturned. Now the preaching of the Gospel, as I mentioned a little ago, tended to raise the expectation, that the Church would assume a totally different form from what had previously belonged to it. They thought that the ancient and accustomed government was to be abolished. This opinion, in many respects, was very dangerous. Devout worshippers of God would never have embraced the Gospel, if it had been a revolt from *the law;* while light and turbulent spirits would eagerly have seized on an occasion offered to them for entirely overthrowing the state of religion: for we know in what insolent freaks rash people are ready to indulge when there is any thing new.

381 "Pour abolir;" — "to abolish."

382 "Un iota ou un seul poinct;" — "one iota or a single point."

Besides, Christ saw that the greater part of the Jews, though they professed to believe the Law, were profane and degenerate. The condition of the people was so decayed, every thing was filled with so many corruptions, and the negligence or malice of the priests had so completely extinguished the pure light of doctrine, that there no longer remained any reverence for the Law. But if a new kind of doctrine had been introduced, which would destroy the authority of *the Law and the Prophets,* religion would have sustained a dreadful injury. This appears to be the first reason, why Christ declared that *he had not come to destroy the Law*. Indeed, the context makes this abundantly clear: for he immediately adds, by way of confirmation, that it is impossible for *even one point of the Law to fail,* — and pronounces a curse on those teachers who do not faithfully labor to maintain its authority.

The second reason was, to refute the wicked slander which, he knew was brought against him by the ignorant and unlearned. This charge, it is evident, had been fastened on his doctrine by the scribes: for he proceeds immediately to direct his discourse against them. We must keep in mind the object which Christ had in view. While he invites and exhorts the Jews to receive the Gospel, he still retains them in obedience to *the Law;* and, on the other hand, he boldly refutes the base reproaches and slanders, by which his enemies labored to make his preaching infamous or suspected.

If we intend to reform affairs which are in a state of disorder, we must always exercise such prudence and moderation, as will convince the people, that we do not oppose the eternal Word of God, or introduce any novelty that is contrary to Scripture. We must take care, that no suspicion of such contrariety shall injure the faith of the godly, and that rash men shall not be emboldened by a pretense of novelty. In short, we must endeavor to oppose a profane contempt of the Word of God, and to prevent religion from being despised by the ignorant. The defense which Christ makes, to free his doctrine from slanders, ought to encourage us, if we are now exposed to the same calumnies. That crime was charged against Paul, that he was an apostate from the law of God, (Acts 21:21) and we need not, therefore, wonder, if the Papists endeavor, in the same manner, to render us odious. Following the example of Christ, we ought to clear ourselves from false accusations, and, at the same time, to profess the truth freely, though it may expose us to unjust reproaches.

I am not come to destroy. God had, indeed, promised a *new covenant* at the coming of Christ; but had, at the same time, showed, that it would not be different from *the first,* but that, on the contrary, its design was, to give a perpetual sanction to the covenant, which he had made from the beginning, with his own people.

> "I will write my law, (says he,) in their hearts,
> and I will remember their iniquities no more,"
> (Jeremiah 31:33, 34.)[383]

383 The reader will find a copious illustration of this remarkable passage in Jeremiah, and of its bearing on the Christian system, in the author's commentary on the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. — *Ed.*

By these words he is so far from departing from the former covenant, that, on the contrary, he declares, that it will be confirmed and ratified, when it shall be succeeded by the new. This is also the meaning of Christ's words, when he says, that *he came to fulfill the law:* for he actually fulfilled it, by quickening, with his Spirit, the dead letter, and then exhibiting, in reality, what had hitherto appeared only in figures.

With respect to doctrine, we must not imagine that the coming of Christ has freed us from the authority of the law: for it is the eternal rule of a devout and holy life, and must, therefore, be as unchangeable, as the justice of God, which it embraced, is constant and uniform. With respect to ceremonies, there is some appearance of a change having taken place; but it was only the use of them that was abolished, for their meaning was more fully confirmed. The coming of Christ has taken nothing away even from ceremonies, but, on the contrary, confirms them by exhibiting the truth of shadows: for, when we see their full effect, we acknowledge that they are not vain or useless. Let us therefore learn to maintain inviolable this sacred tie between the law and the Gospel, which many improperly attempt to break. For it contributes not a little to confirm the authority of the Gospel, when we learn, that it is nothing else than *a fulfillment of the law;* so that both, with one consent, declare God to be their Author.

18. *Till heaven and earth pass* Luke expresses it a little differently, but to the same import, that *it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one point of the law to fail* The design of Christ, in both passages, was to teach, that the truth of the law and of every part of it, is secure, and that nothing so durable is to be found in the whole frame of the world. Some persons indulge in ingenious refinements on the word *till, (*ἕως ἄ ν,*)* as if *the passing away of the heaven and earth,* which will take place on the last day, the day of judgment, were to put an end to *the law and the prophets* And certainly, as

"tongues shall then cease, and prophecies shall be abolished,"

(1 Corinthians 13:8,)

I think that the written law, as well as the exposition of it, will come to an end; but, as I am of opinion that Christ spoke more simply, I do not choose to feed the ears of readers with such amusements. Let it suffice for us to hold, that sooner shall heaven fall to pieces, and the whole frame of the world become a mass of confusion, than the stability of the law shall give way. But what does it mean, that every part of the law shall be fulfilled down to the smallest *point?* for we see, that even those, who have been regenerated by the Spirit of God, are very far from keeping the law of God in a perfect manner. I answer, the expression, *shall not pass away,* must be viewed as referring, not to the life of men, but to the perfect truth of the doctrine. "There is nothing in the law that is unimportant, nothing that was put there at, random; and so it is impossible that a single letter shall perish."

19. *Whoever then shall break* Christ here speaks expressly of the commandments of life, or the ten words, which all the children of God ought to take as the rule of their life. He

therefore declares, that they are false and deceitful teachers, who do not restrain their disciples within obedience to the law, and that they are unworthy to occupy a place in the Church, who weaken, in the slightest degree, the authority of the law; and, on the other hand, that they are honest and faithful ministers of God, who recommend, both by word and by example, the keeping of the law. *The least commandments* is an expression used in accommodation to the judgment of men: for though they have not all the same weight, (but, when they are compared together, some are less than others,) yet we are not at liberty to think any thing *small,* on which the heavenly Legislator has been pleased to issue a command. For what sacrilege is it to treat contemptuously any thing which has proceeded from his sacred mouth? This is to sink his majesty to the rank of creatures. Accordingly, when our Lord calls them *little commandments,* it is a sort of concession. *He shall be called the least* This is an allusion to what he had just said about the *commandments:* but the meaning is obvious. Those who shall pour contempt on the doctrine of the law, or on a single syllable of it, will be rejected as the lowest of men.[384]

The kingdom of heaven means the renovation of the Church, or the prosperous condition of the Church, such as was then beginning to appear by the preaching of the Gospel. In this sense, Christ tells us, that "he who is least *in the kingdom of God* is greater than John," (Luke 7:28.) The meaning of that phrase is, that God, restoring the world by the hand of his Son, has completely established his kingdom. Christ declares that, when his Church shall have been renewed, no teachers must be admitted to it, but those who are faithful expounders of the law, and who labor to maintain its doctrine entire. But it is asked, were not ceremonies among *the commandments* of God, the *least of which* we are now required to observe? I answer, We must look to the design and object of the Legislator. God enjoined ceremonies, that their outward use might be temporal, and their meaning eternal. That man does not *break* ceremonies, who omits what is shadowy, but retains their effect. But if Christ banishes from his *kingdom* all who accustom men to any contempt of the law how monstrous must be their stupidity, who are not ashamed to remit, by a sacrilegious indulgence, what God strictly demands, and, under the pretense of venial sin, to overthrow the righteousness of the law.[385] Again, we must observe the description he gives of good and holy teachers: that not only by words, but chiefly by the example of life, they exhort[386] men to keep the law.

384 "Comme 1es plus inutiles du monde;" — "as the most useless in the world."

385 "De mettre la justice de la Loy sous les pieds;" — "to trample the justice of the law under their feet."

386 "Ils exhortent et incitent les hommes;" — "they exhort and incite men."

MATTHEW 5:20-22

Matthew 5:20-22
20. For I say to you, That, unless your righteousness shall be more abundant [387] than that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you shall not enter [388] into the kingdom of heaven. **21**. You have heard that it was said to the ancients, [389] Thou shalt not kill: and he who shall kill shall be liable to judgment. [390] **22**. But I say to you, That every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment: and he who shall say to his brother, Racha, shall be liable to the council: and he who shall say, Fool, shall be liable to the hell of fire. [391]

Matthew 5:20. *Unless your righteousness shall be more abundant. He* takes a passing notice of *the Scribes,* who were laboring to throw a stain on the doctrine of the Gospel, as if it were the ruin of the Law. True, he does not reason on this subject, but only points out briefly, that nothing has less influence over their minds than zeal for the law. "They pretend, that their hostility to me arises from their strong desire, that the law should not be violated. But their life makes it evident, how coldly they observe the law, — nay more, how unconcerned they are about mocking God,[392] while they boast before men of an assumed and hypocritical righteousness." This is the view which the most of commentators give of the passage.

But it deserves inquiry, whether he does not rather blame the corrupted manner of teaching, which *the Pharisees and Scribes* followed in instructing the people. By confining the law of God to outward duties only, they trained their disciples, like apes, to hypocrisy.[393] They lived, I readily admit, as ill as they taught, and even worse: and therefore, along with their corrupted doctrine, I willingly include their hypocritical parade of false righteousness. The principal charge brought by Christ against their doctrine may be easily learned from what follows in the discourse, where he removes from the law their false and wicked inter-

387 "Si votre justice n'outrepasse;" — "if your righteousness does not go beyond."

388 "Vous n'entrerez nullement, *ou,* jamais;" — "you shall not at all enter, *or,* you shall *never* enter."

389 "Aux anciens."

390 "Sera digne d'estre puni par jugement;" — "shall be worthy of being punished by judgment."

391 "Sera digne d'estre puni par la gehenne du feu;" — "shall be worthy of being punished by the gehenna of fire."

392 "Comme ils se moquent de Dieu sans en faire conscience." — "How they mock God, without making conscience of it."

393 "Ils accoustumoyent leurs disc p es k ne hypocrisle, et en faisoyent des singes." — "They accustomed their disciples to a hypocrisy, and made apes of them."

pretations, and restores it to its purity. In short, the objection which, as we have already said, was unjustly brought against him by the Scribes, is powerfully thrown back on themselves.

We must bear in mind, what we have mentioned elsewhere, that the Pharisees are added to the Scribes by way of enlarging on what he had said: for that sect had, above all others, obtained a reputation for sanctity. It is a mistake, however, to suppose, that they were called *Pharisees* on account of *division,*[394] because they *separated* themselves from the ordinary class, and claimed a rank peculiar to themselves. They were called ⊠⊠⊠⊠, that is, *Expounders,*[395] because they were not satisfied with the bare letter, but boasted of being in possession of a key to open up hidden meanings. Hence arose an immense mass of errors, when they assumed magisterial authority, and ventured, according to their wicked fancy and their equally wicked pride, to thrust forward their own inventions in place of Scripture.

21. *You have heard that it was said.* This sentence, and those which immediately follow, are connected with what we have just considered: for our Lord explains more fully, by minute instances, by what tortuous methods[396] the Pharisees debase the law, so that their righteousness is mere filth. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that this is an ἐπανόρθωσις, or *correc-*

394 "De division, ou separation;" — "of division, or separation."

395 Among a host of opinions as to the origin of the name *Pharisees,* there is room to doubt if Calvin has hit upon the true etymology. There are two roots: ⊠⊠⊠ *(paras,) to spread out,* with *Sin* for the final letter, — and ⊠⊠⊠ *(parash,). to explain, to separate,* with *Schin.* Both have been pressed into the service. The former is chiefly quoted in support of an allusion to our Lord's description of them, that *they make broad their phylacteries,* (Matthew 23:5.) But the latter root has been more fertile in suggestions. *John Alberti,* no mean authority, in his *Glossarium Grcecurn,* (under Luke 11:38,) defines Φαρισαῖος, to be διακεχωρισμένος, *separated,* and quotes the Septuagint as employing that participle (Ezekiel 34:12) for, ⊠⊠⊠⊠ the principhal participle of ⊠⊠⊠, *(parash.)* From *Hesychius* he gives synonyms of like import, — Φαρισαῖος, ἀφωρισμένος, μεμερισμένος, καθαρός As to the last of those terms, καθαρός, the learned *Vitringa,* to whom *Alberti* also refers, has copiously illustrated its meaning in a passage, which has been often quoted as embodying the proud challenge of the Pharisee, *Stand by: for I am holier than thou,* (Isaiah 65:5) — *Suidas* unhesitatingly defends the same idea of *separation.* His definition is as follows: Φαρισαῖοι οἱ ἑρμηνευόμενοι ἀφωρισμένοι, παρὰ τὸ μερίζειν καὶ ἀφορίζειν ἑαυτοὺς τῶν ἄλλων ἁπάντων, εἵς τε τὸ καθαρώτατον τοῦ βίου, καὶ ἀκριβέστατον, καὶ εἰς τὰ τοῦ νόμου ἐντάλματα. *"Pharisees, — which* means *separated,* on account of their *dividing* and *separating* themselves from all others, to the greatest purity and strictness of life, and to the prescriptions of the law." — Calvin's derivation is from the same root, and is certainly ingenious. That sect, we know, boasted of a rigid adherence to the law, though it may be questioned whether profound skill in *exposition* was claimed by all its members. Many of them might think that this belonged to the Scribes as a professional matter. — *Ed.*

396 "Comment les Phariseens avoyent deprave la Loy par leurs expositions tortues;" — "how the Pharisees had debased the law by their crooked expositions."

tion [397] of the Law, and that Christ raises his disciples to a higher degree of perfection, than Christ could raise a gross and carnal nation, which was scarcely able to learn first principles. It has been a prevailing opinion, that the beginning of righteousness was laid down in the ancient law, but that the perfection of it is pointed out in the Gospel. But nothing was farther from the design of Christ, than to alter or innovate any thing in the commandments of the law. There God has once fixed the rule of life which he will never retract. But as the law had been corrupted by false expositions, and turned to a profane meaning, Christ vindicates it against such corruptions, and points out its true meaning, from which the Jews had departed.

That the doctrine of the law not only commences, but brings to perfection, a holy life, may be inferred from a single fact, that it requires a perfect love of God and of our neighbor, (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18.) He who possesses such a love wants nothing of the highest perfection. So far as respects the rules of a holy life, the law conducts men to the goal, or farthest point, of righteousness. Accordingly, Paul declares *the law* to be *weak,* not in itself, but in our *flesh,* (Romans 8:3.) But if Moses had given nothing more than the first lessons of true righteousness, how ridiculous would have been that appeal!

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that ye may live," (Deuteronomy 30:19.)

Again,

"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, and to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul?" (Deuteronomy 10:12.)

Vain and deceitful, also, would have been that promise, "The man that doeth them shall live in them," (Leviticus 18:5; Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12.)

That Christ, on the other hand, intended to make no correction in the precepts of the law, is very clear from other passages: for to those who desire to enter into life by their good works, he gives no other injunction, than to, *keep the commandments* of the law, (Matthew 19:17.) From no other source do the Apostles, as well as Christ himself, draw the rules for a devout and holy life. It is doing a grievous injury to God, the author of the Law, to imagine that the eyes, and hands, and feet alone, are trained by it to a hypocritical appearance of good works, and that it is only in the Gospel that we are taught to love God with the heart. Away, then, with that error, "The deficiencies of the law are here supplied by Christ." We must not imagine Christ to be a new legislator, who adds any thing to the eternal righteousness of his Father. We must listen to him as a faithful expounder, that we may know what is the nature of the law, what is its object, and what is its extent.

It now remains for us to see, what Christ condemns in the Pharisees, and in what respect his interpretation of it differs from their glosses. The amount of it is, that they had changed

397 "Une correction ou amplification de la Loy;" — "a correction or enlargement of the Law."

the doctrine of the law into a political order, and had made obedience to it to consist entirely in the performance of outward duties. Hence it came, that he who had not slain a man with his hand was pronounced to be free from the guilt of murder, and he who had not polluted his body by adultery was supposed to be pure and chaste before God. This was an intolerable profanation of the law: for it is certain, that Moses everywhere demands the spiritual worship of God. From the very nature of the law we must conclude, that God, who gave it by the hand of Moses, spoke to the hearts, as well as to the hands and to the eyes. True, our Lord quotes the very words of the law; but he does so in accommodation to the view which was generally taken of them by the people. "Till now, *the scribes* have given you a literal interpretation of the law, that it is enough, if a man keep his hands from murder and from acts of violence. But I warn you, that you must ascend much higher. *Love is the fulfilling of the law,* (Romans 13:10;)and I say that your neighbor is injured, when you act towards him otherwise than as a friend." The latter clause which he quotes, *he who kills shall be liable to the judgment,* confirms what I said a little before, that Christ charges them with turning into a political scheme the law of God, which had been given for the government of the heart.

22. *But I say to you* His reply is not opposed to the command of Moses, (Exodus 20:13; Leviticus 24:21; Numbers 35:16;) but to the interpretation usually put upon it by the scribes. Now, as the Pharisees boasted of antiquity, (for it is always the custom to plead the prescription of a long period in defense of errors,)[398] Christ reminds the people of his authority, to which all antiquity ought justly to give way. Hence we conclude, that truth is of greater weight than custom or the number of years.

He who shall say to his brother Christ assigns three degrees of condemnation besides the violence of the hands; which implies, that this precept of the law restrains not only the hands, but all affections that are opposed to brotherly love. "Those who shall only be angry with their brethren, or treat them with haughty disdain, or injure them by any reproach, are murderers." Now, as it is certain that the word *Racha* occupies an intermediate place between *anger* and openly reproachful language, I have no doubt that it is an interjection of contempt or disdain. Though Christ adjudges *to the hell of fire* none but those who break out into open reproach, we must not suppose, that he declares *anger* to be free from a similar punishment; but, alluding to earthly judgments, he assures them that God will judge and punish even concealed *anger.*[399] But, as he who manifests his indignation by bitter language goes farther than this, Christ says, that that man will be held guilty by the *whole heavenly council,* that he may receive severer punishment.

398 "Pour maintenir et defendre les erreurs ou abus en la matiere de la religion;" — "to maintain and defend errors or abuses in matters of religion."

399 "L'indignation secrette qu'on aura eue en son coeur contre le frere;" —"the secret indignation which they shall have had in their heart against their brother."

Those, again, who break out into reproaches are adjudged *to the hell of fire:* which implies, that hatred, and every thing that is contrary to love, is enough to expose them to eternal death, though they may have committed no acts of violence. Γέεννα (*hell*) is, beyond all question, a foreign word. ⊠⊠ (*Ge*) is the Hebrew word for a valley. Now, "the valley of Hinnom" was infamous for the detestable superstition which was committed in it, because there they sacrificed their children to idols, (2 Chronicles 33:6.) The consequence was, that holy men, in order to excite stronger hatred of that wicked ungodliness, used it as the name for *hell,* that the very name might be dreaded by the people as shocking and alarming. It would appear that, in the time of Christ, this was a received way of speaking, and that *hell* was then called by no other name than *gehenna, (*γέεννα*,)* the word being slightly altered from the true pronunciation.

MATTHEW 5:23-26; LUKE 12:58-59

Matthew 5:23-26	Luke 12:58-59
23. Therefore, if thou shalt bring thy gift to the altar, and there shalt remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, **24**. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go away: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer [400] thy gift. **25**. Be agreed with thy adversary quickly, while thou art in the way with him: lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be thrown into prison. **26**. Verily I say to thee, Thou shalt not depart thence, till thou shalt have paid the last farthing.	**58**. Now, when thou goest with thy adversary to the magistrate, do thy endeavor, while thou art in the way, to be delivered from him: lest perhaps he drag thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer throw thee into prison. **59**. I say to thee, Thou shalt no depart thence, until thou pay even the last mite.

Matthew 5:23. *Therefore, if thou shalt bring thy gift* This clause confirms, and at the same time explains, the preceding doctrine. It amounts to this, that the precept of the law, which forbids murder, (Exodus 20:13,) is obeyed, when we maintain agreement and brotherly kindness, with our neighbor. To impress this more strongly upon us, Christ declares, that even the duties of religion are displeasing to God, and are rejected by him, if we are at variance with each other. When he commands those who have injured any of their brethren, *to be reconciled to him,* before they *offer their gift,* his meaning is, that, so long as a difference with our neighbor is kept up by our fault, we have no access to God. But if the worship, which men render to God, is polluted and corrupted by their resentments, this enables us to conclude, in what estimation he holds mutual agreement among ourselves.

Here a question may be put. Is it not absurd, that the duties of charity should be esteemed more highly than the worship of God? We shall then be forced to say, that the order of the law is improper, or that the first table of the law must be preferred to the second. The answer is easy: for the words of Christ mean nothing more than this, that it is a false and empty profession of worshipping God, which is made by those who, after acting unjustly towards their brethren, treat them with haughty disdain. By a *synecdoche* he takes a single class to express the outward exercises of divine worship, which in many men are rather the pretenses, than the true expressions, of godliness. It ought to be observed that Christ, adapting his discourse to that age, speaks of sacrifices. Our condition is now different: but the doctrine

400 "Veniens offer;" — "coming offer." — "Lors vien et presente ton oblation;" — "then come and present thy oblation."

remains the same, that whatever we offer to God is polluted, unless, at least *as much as lieth in us,* (Romans 12:18,) we are at peace with our brethren. Alms are called in Scripture *sacrifices of a sweet smell,* (Philippians 4:18;) and we learn from the mouth of Paul, that he who

"spends all his substance on the poor,
if he have not charity, is nothing," (1 Corinthians 13:3.)

Lastly, God does not receive and acknowledge, as his sons, any who do not, in their turn, show themselves to be brethren to each other. Although it is only to those who have injured their brethren that these words are addressed, enjoining them *to do their endeavor to be reconciled to them,* yet under one class he points out, how highly the harmony of brethren is esteemed by God. When he commands them to leave the gift before the altar, he expresses much more than if he had said, that it is to no purpose for men to go to *the temple,* or *offer sacrifices to God,* so long as they live in discord with their neighbors.

25. *Be agreed with thy adversary* Christ appears to go farther, and to exhort to reconciliation not only those who have injured their brethren, but those also who are unjustly treated.[401] But I interpret the words as having been spoken with another view, to take away occasion for hatred and resentment, and to point out the method of cherishing good-will. For whence come all injuries, but from this, that each person is too tenacious of his own rights, that is, each is too much disposed to consult his own convenience to the disadvantage of others? Almost all are so blinded by a wicked love of themselves, that, even in the worst causes, they flatter themselves that they are in the right. To meet all hatred, enmity, debates, and acts of injustice, Christ reproves that obstinacy, which is the source of these evils, and enjoins his own people to cultivate moderation and justice, and to make some abatement from the highest rigor, that, by such an act of justice, they may purchase for themselves peace and friendship.[402] It were to be wished, indeed, that no controversy of any kind should ever arise among us; and undoubtedly men would never break out into abuse or quarrelling, if they possessed a due share of meekness. But, as it is scarcely possible but that differences will sometimes happen, Christ points out the remedy, by which they may be immediately settled; and that is, to put a restraint on our desires, and rather to act to our own disadvantage, than follow up our rights with unflinching rigor. That Christ frequently gave this exhortation is evident from the twelfth chapter of Luke's Gospel, where he does not relate the sermon on the mount, but gives an abridgment of various passages in our Lord's discourses.

401 "Mais aussi ceux qui sont assaillis et provoquez les premiers;" — "but also those who are first attacked and provoked."

402 "Afin que ne prenans pas les choses a la rigueur, ils rachetent paix et amite en se monstrans ainsi traitables." — "That, not taking things to the rigor, they may purchase peace and friendship, by showing themselves so tractable."

Lest the adversary deliver thee to the judge This part is explained by some in a metaphorical sense, that the Heavenly Judge will act toward us with the utmost rigor, so as to forgive us nothing, if we do not labor to settle those differences which we have with our neighbors. But I view it more simply, as an admonition that, even among men, it is usually advantageous for us to come to an early agreement with adversaries, because, with quarrelsome persons, their obstinacy often costs them dear. At the same time, I admit, that the comparison is justly applied to God; for he will *exercise judgment without mercy* (James 2:13) to him who is implacable to his brethren, or pursues his contentiousness to the utmost. But it is highly ridiculous in the Papists, to construct their purgatory out of a continued allegory on this passage. Nothing is more evident than that the subject of Christ's discourse is the cultivation of friendship among men. They have no shame, or conscientious scruple, to pervert his words, and to torture them into a widely different meaning, provided they can impose on the unlearned. But as they do not deserve a lengthened refutation, I shall only point out, in a single word, their shameful ignorance. *The adversary* is supposed by them to be the devil. But Christ enjoins those who believe on him to *be agreed with the adversary* Therefore, in order that the Papists may find their purgatory here, they must first become the friends and brethren of devils. A *farthing* is well known to be the fourth part of a penny: but here, as is evident from Luke, it denotes a *mite,* or any small piece of money. Now, if we were disposed to cavilling,[403] we might here obtain another exposure of the absurdity of the Papists. For, if he who has once entered Purgatory will never leave it, *till he has paid the last farthing,* it follows, that the suffrages (as they call them) of the living for the dead are of no avail. For Christ makes no allowance, that others may free a debtor by satisfying for him, but expressly demands from each person the payment of what he owes.[404] Now, if Moses and other satisfactions are useless, however warm the fire of Purgatory may be, yet the kitchens of priests and monks, for the sake of which they are so anxious to maintain it, will be cool enough.

403 "Qui voudroit user de cavillation et chippoter sur chacun mot." — "One who would cavil and higgle about every word."

404 "Mais il requiert nommement qu'un chacun satisface pour soy, et paye ce qu'il doit." — "But he requires expressly that each satisfy for himself and pay what he owes."

MATTHEW 5:27-30

Matthew 5:27-30
27. You have heard that it was said to the ancients, Thou shalt not commit adultery. **28**. But I say to you, That whoever shall look upon a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart. **29**. And if thy right eye shall be a stumbling block [405] to thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is better for thee that one of thy members perish, and that thy whole body be not thrown into hell. **30**. And if thy right hand shall be a hindrance to thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is better that one of thy members perish, and that thy whole body be not thrown into hell.

Matthew 5:27. *Thou shalt not commit adultery.* Christ proceeds with his subject, and shows, that the law of God not only has authority over the life, in a political view, to form the outward manners, but that it requires pure and holy affections of the heart. We must remember what I have already stated, that though Christ quotes the very words of the law, it is the gross and false meaning, which had been put upon it by dishonest interpreters, that he blames. He has already told us, that he did not come as a new Legislator, but as the faithful expounder of a law which had been already given. It might be objected that, through long practice, that interpretation had grown old. Christ expressly admits this, but meets it by saying, that the antiquity of an error ought not to be allowed to plead in its favor.

28. *Whoever shall look upon a woman.* The design of Christ was to condemn generally the lust of the flesh. He says, that not only those who have seduced their neighbors' wives, but those who have polluted their eyes by an immodest look, are adulterers before God. This is a *synec-doche:*[406] for not only the eyes, but even the concealed flames of the heart, render men guilty of adultery. Accordingly, Paul makes chastity (1 Corinthians 7:34) to consist both in body and in mind. But Christ reckoned it enough to refute the gross mistake which was prevalent: for they thought that it was only necessary to guard against outward adultery. As it is generally by the wantonness of the eyes that temptations are presented to the mind, and as lust enters, as it were, by that door, Christ used this mode of speaking, when he wished to condemn lust: which is evident from the expression, *to lust after her.* This teaches us also, that not only those who form a deliberate purpose of fornication, but those who admit any polluted thoughts, are reckoned adulterers before God. The hypocrisy of the Papists, therefore, is too gross and stupid, when they affirm that lust is not a sin, until it gain the full consent of the heart. But we need not wonder, that they make sin to be so

405 "Si ton ceil dextre to fait chopper." — "If thy right eye makes thee stumble."

406 "C'est une facon de parler qu'on appelle Synecdoche, quand on prend une artie our le tout." — "It is a way of speaking which is called Synecdoche, when a part is taken for the whole."

small a matter: for those who ascribe righteousness to the merit of works must be very dull and stupid in judging of their sins.

29. *If thy right eye shall be a stumbling-block to thee.* It might be thought that, considering the weakness of the flesh and of nature, Christ pressed too severely on men, and therefore he anticipates all such complaints. The general meaning is, that however difficult, or severe, or troublesome, or harsh, any commandment of God may be, yet no excuse ought to be pleaded on those grounds, because the justice of God ought to stand higher in our estimation, than all that we reckon most precious and valuable. "You have no right to object to me, that you can scarcely turn your eyes in any direction, without being suddenly drawn away by some temptation: for you ought rather to part with your eyes, than to depart from the commandments of God." And yet Christ does not mean, that we must mutilate our body, in order to obey God: but as all would readily wish, that they should not be restrained from the free use of their senses, Christ employs an exaggerated[407] form of speech to show, that whatever hinders us from yielding that obedience to God which he requires in his law, ought to be cut off. And he does so expressly, because men allow themselves too much liberty in that respect. If the mind were pure, the eyes and hands would be obedient to it; for it is certain, that they have no movement of their own. But here we are deeply to blame. We are so far from being as careful as we ought to be, to avoid allurements, that we rather provoke our senses to wickedness by allowing them unbounded liberty.

407 "Par une facon de parler *hyperbolique,* (c'est a dire, *excessive:")* — "by a *hyperbolical*, that is, an *excessive* mode of speaking."

MATTHEW 5:31-32; LUKE 16:18

Matthew 5:31-32	Luke 16:18
31. Again, it hath been said, Whoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. [408] **32**. But I say to you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, except on account of unchastity, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry a woman that is put away committeth adultery.	**18**. Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth a woman put away from her husband committeth adultery.

Matthew 5:31. *Whosoever shall put away his wife.* As a more suitable occasion for discussing and explaining this doctrine at greater length will afterwards occur, (Matthew 19:9,) I shall now state briefly what Christ says in this passage. As the Jews falsely imagined that they discharged their whole duty toward God, when they kept the law in a national manner, so whatever the national law did not forbid, they foolishly supposed to be lawful. Divorces, which husbands were wont to give to their wives, had not been prohibited by Moses as to external order, but only, for the sake of restraining lewdness, he had ordered that "a bill of divorcement" should be given to the wives who were put away, (Deuteronomy 24:1.) It was a sort of testimonial of freedom, so that the woman was afterwards free from the yoke and power of the husband; while the husband at the same time acknowledged, that he did not send her away on account of any crime, but because she did not please him. Hence proceeded the error, that there was nothing wrong in such putting away, provided that the forms of law were observed.[409]

But they did wrong in viewing as a matter of civil law, the rule which had been given them for a devout and holy life. For national laws are sometimes accommodated to the manners of men but God, in prescribing a spiritual law, looked not at what men can do, but at what they ought to do. It contains a perfect and entire righteousness, though we want ability to fulfill it. Christ, therefore, admonishes us not to conclude, that what is allowed by the national law of Moses is, on that account, lawful in the sight of God. That man, (says he,) who puts away his wife, and gives her *a bill of divorcement,* shelters himself under the pretense of the law: but the bond of marriage is too sacred to be dissolved at the will, or rather at the licentious pleasure, of men. Though the husband and the wife are united by mutual consent, yet God binds them by an indissoluble tie, so that they are not afterwards

408 "Ou, separation;" — "or, separation."

409 "Pourveu qu'on observast ce que la Loy commandoit en tel cas;"— "provided that what the Law commanded in such a case were observed."

at liberty to separate. An exception is added, *except on account of fornication:* for the woman, who has basely violated the marriage-vow, is justly cast off; because it was by her fault that the tie was broken, and the husband set at liberty.

32. *Causeth her to commit adultery.* As the *bill of divorcement* bore, that the woman had been loosed from her former husband, and might enter into a new marriage, the man who, unjustly and unlawfully, abandons the wife whom God had given him, is justly condemned for having prostituted his wife to others.

MATTHEW 5:33-37

Matthew 5:33-37
33. Again, ye have heard that it was said to the ancients, Thou shalt not perjure thyself: but thou shalt perform to the Lord what thou hast sworn. **34**. But I charge you, swear not at all: neither by heaven, for it is the throne of God: **35**. Nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King: **36**. Nor shalt thou swear by thy head: for thou canst not make one hair white or black. **37**. But your speech shall be, Yes, yes; No, no for what is beyond these comes from evil. [410]

33. *Thou shalt not perjure thyself* This also is not a correction of the law, but a true interpretation of it. For God condemned in the law not only acts of perjury, but lightness in swearing, which lessens the reverence for his name. The man who *perjures himself* is not the only person who *takes the name of God in vain,* (Exodus 20:7.) He does so, who idly and contemptuously pronounces the name of God on trivial occasions, or in ordinary conversation. While the law condemns every kind of profanation of the name of God the Jews imagined, that the guilt of it lay entirely in acts of perjury. Christ reproves this gross error of supposing that they might, without danger, abuse the name of God, provided they did not swear falsely. We are, no doubt, strictly enjoined to *perform to the Lord what we have sworn:* for he who, after employing the name of God, cheats and deceives his neighbors, does an injury to God as well as to man. But it is improper to confine to a single part that which has a wider reference. Some consider the word *perform* as applying to vows, when any thing has been promised to God on account of religion. But this mode of expression applies very well to all promises and engagements, which have been sanctioned by the use of the name of God: for in such cases God is appealed to as guarantee between the parties, to secure their fidelity.

34. *Swear not at all* Many have been led by the phrase, *not at all,* to adopt the false notion, that every kind of swearing is condemned by Christ. Some good men have been driven to this extreme rigor by observing the unbridled licentiousness of swearing, which prevailed in the world. The Anabaptists, too, have blustered a great deal, on the ground, that Christ appears to give no liberty to swear on any occasion, because he commands, *Swear not at all* But we need not go beyond the immediate context to obtain the exposition: for he immediately adds, *neither by heaven, nor by the earth* Who does not see that those kinds of swearing were added by way of exposition, to explain the former clause more fully by specifying a number of cases? The Jews had circuitous or indirect ways of swearing: and when they *swore by heaven, or by earth,* or *by the altar,* (Matthew 23:18,) they reckoned it to be next to

410 "Du mal, *ou, malin, ou meschant,"* (James 5:12;)—"from evil, *or, malignant, or wicked."*

nothing; and, as one vice springs from another, they defended, under this pretense, any profanation of the name of God that was not openly avowed.

To meet this crime, our Lord declares that they must *not swear at all,* either in this or that way, either *by heaven,* or *by the earth* Hence we conclude, that the particle, *at all,* relates not to the substance, but to the form, and means, *"neither* directly nor indirectly." It would otherwise have been superfluous to enumerate those kinds: and therefore the Anabaptists betray not only a rage for controversy, but gross ignorance, when they obstinately press upon us a single word, and pass over, with closed eyes, the whole scope of the passage. Is it objected, that Christ permits no swearing? I reply: What the expounder of the law says, must be viewed in connection with its design. His statement amounts to this, that there are other ways of "taking the name of God in vain," besides perjury; and, therefore, that we ought to refrain from allowing ourselves the liberty of unnecessary swearing: for, when there are just reasons to demand it, the law not only permits, but expressly commands us to swear. Christ, therefore, meant nothing more than this, that all oaths are unlawful, which in any way abuse and profane the sacred name of God, for which they ought to have had the effect of producing a deeper reverence.

Neither by heaven It is a mistake to explain these words as meaning, that such forms of swearing are condemned by Christ as faulty, on the ground that we ought to swear by God only. The reasons which he brings forward tend rather to the opposite view, that we swear by the name of God even when we name the *heaven,* and *the earth:* because there is no part of the world on which God has not engraved the marks of his glory. But this statement appears not to agree with the precept of the law, in which God expressly commands us to "swear by his name," (Deuteronomy 6:13;) and likewise with so many passages of Scripture, in which he complains, that injury is done to him, if we swear by creatures. I reply: It is a corruption allied to idolatry, when we appeal to them either as having a right to judge, or authority to prove testimony: for we must look at the object of swearing. It is an appeal which men make to God to revenge falsehood, and to uphold truth. This honor cannot be transferred to another, without committing an outrage on the divine majesty.

For the same reason the Apostle says, that we do not swear in a right manner, unless we swear by *the greater,* and that it belongs to God alone to *swear by himself,* (Hebrews 6:13.) Thus any one who, in ancient times, swore by "Moloch," (Leviticus 18:21,) or by any other idol, withdrew something of what belonged to God; because they put that idol in the place of God, as possessing an acquaintance with the hearts, and as the judge of the souls of men. And in our own times, those who swear by angels, or by departed saints, take from God what belongs to him, and ascribe to them a divine majesty. The case is different, when men *swear by heaven and earth,* with a view to the Creator himself: for, in that case, the sanctity of the oath is not founded on creatures, but God alone is appealed to as a witness, by bringing forward the symbols of his glory.

Heaven is called in Scripture (Isaiah 66:1) the *throne of God:* not that he dwells in heaven alone, but to teach men to raise their minds upwards, whenever they think of him, and not to form any low or earthly conceptions of him. Again, *the earth* is called *his footstool,* (v. 35,) to inform us, that he fills all things, and that no extent of space can contain him. The holiness of *Jerusalem* (v. 35) depended on his promise. It was *the holy city,* (Isaiah 52:1:) because God had selected it to be the seat and residence of his empire. When men *swear by their head,* (v. 36,) they bring forward their life, which is a remarkable gift of God, as a pledge of their sincerity.

37. *But your speech shall be, Yes, yes; No, no* Christ now prescribes, in the second place, a remedy; which is, that men act towards each other sincerely and honestly: for then simplicity of speech will have quite as much weight as an oath has among those who are not sincere. Now, this is certainly the best way of correcting faults, to point out the sources from which they spring. Whence comes the great propensity to swearing, but from the great falsehood, the numerous impositions, the unsteady and light conduct, so that hardly any thing is believed?[411] Fairness and honesty in our words are, therefore, demanded by Christ, that there may be no longer any occasion for an oath.

"Yes, yes; No, no." This repetition means, that we ought to abide by our words, so that all may be convinced of our honesty. Now, as this is the true and lawful method of proceeding, when men have nothing on their tongue but what is in their heart, Christ declares, that *what is beyond these comes from evil* I do not approve of the exposition of these words which some have given, that the criminality of swearing ought to be charged on the man who does not give credit to what another says. Christ teaches us, in my opinion, that it originates in the wickedness of men, that they are compelled to swear: for, if honesty prevailed among men, if they were not inconsistent and hypocritical, they would maintain that simplicity which nature dictates. And yet it does not follow, that it is unlawful to swear, when necessity demands it: for many things are proper in themselves, though they have had a wicked origin.

411 "D'ou vient une si grande legerete en sermens, sinon qu'entre tout de mensonges, tromperies, inconstance et babil, on ne sait qui croire, ni a qui se fier?" — "Whence comes so great a lightness about oaths, but that among so many lies and impositions, and so much unsteadiness and trifling, one does not know whom to believe or whom to trust?"

MATTHEW 5:38-41; LUKE 6:29-30

Matthew 5:38-41	Luke 6:29-30
38. You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. **39**. But I say to you, Do not resist evil: but whoever, shall inflict a blow on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also: **40**. And to him who wishes to enter into a law-suit with thee, and to take away thy coat, allow him thy cloak also: **41**. And whoever shall constrain thee to one mile, go with him two.	**29**. To him who striketh thee on one cheek offer also the other, and from him who taketh away thy cloak, do not forbid thy coat also. **30**. And to every one that asketh from thee give; and from him who takes what are thine, do not ask them again.

Matthew 5:38. *An eye for an eye. Here* another error is corrected. God had enjoined, by his law, (Leviticus 24:20,) that judges and magistrates should punish those who had done injuries, by making them endure as much as they had inflicted. The consequence was, that every one seized on this as a pretext for taking private revenge. They thought that they did no wrong, provided they were not the first to make the attack, but only, when injured, returned like for like. Christ informs them, on the contrary, that, though judges were entrusted with the defense of the community, and were invested with authority to restrain the wicked and repress their violence, yet it is the duty of every man to bear patiently the injuries which he receives.

39. *Do not resist evil.* There are two ways of resisting: the one, by warding off injuries through inoffensive conduct; the other, by retaliation.[412] Though Christ does not permit his people to repel violence by violence, yet he does not forbid them to endeavor to avoid an unjust attack. The best interpreter of this passage that we can have is Paul, who enjoins us rather to "overcome evil by good" (Romans 12:21) than contend with evil-doers.[413] We must attend to the contrast between the vice and the correction of it. The present subject is retaliation.[414] To restrain his disciples from that kind of indulgence, he forbids them to

412 "L'une par laquelle nous empeschons qu'on ne nous outrage, sans mal-faire a personne de nostre coste: l'autre, par laquelle nous rendons mal pour mal." — "The one, by which we prevent attacks from being made on us, without doing ill to any person on our part: the other, by which we render evil for evil."

413 "Plustost que de rendre la pareille a celuy qui nous a mal-fait." — "Rather than return the like to him who has done us wrong."

414 "Il est ici parle de la facon de faire de ceux lesquels rendent la pareille a ceux qui les ont offensez." — "The subject here spoken of is the manner of acting of those who render the like to those who have offended them."

render evil for evil. He afterwards extends the law of patience so far, that we are not only to bear patiently the injuries we have received, but to prepare for bearing fresh injuries. The amount of the whole admonition is, that believers should learn to forget the wrongs that have been done them, — that they should not, when injured, break out into hatred or ill-will, or wish to commit an injury on their part, — but that, the more the obstinacy and rage of wicked men was excited and inflamed, they should be the more fully disposed to exercise patience.

Whoever shall inflict a blow. Julian,[415] and others of the same description, have foolishly slandered this doctrine of Christ, as if it entirely overturned the laws of a country, and its civil courts. *Augustine,* in his fifth epistle, employs much skill and judgment in showing, that the design of Christ was merely to train the minds of believers to moderation and justice, that they might not, on receiving one or two offenses, fail or lose courage. The observation of Augustine, "that this does not lay down a rule for outward actions," is true, if it be properly understood. I admit that Christ restrains our hands, as well as our minds, from revenge: but when any one has it in his power to protect himself and his property from injury, without exercising revenge, the words of Christ do not prevent him from turning aside gently and inoffensively to avoid the threatened attack.

Unquestionably, Christ did not intend to exhort his people to whet the malice of those, whose propensity to injure others is sufficiently strong: and if they were to *turn to them the other cheek,* what would it be but holding out such an encouragement? It is not the business of a good and judicious commentator to seize eagerly on syllables, but to attend to the design of the speaker: and nothing is more unbecoming the disciples of Christ, than to spend time in cavilling about words, where it is easy to see what the Master means. But in the present instance, the object which Christ has in view is perfectly obvious. He tells us, that the end of one contest will be the beginning of another, and that, through the whole course of their life, believers must lay their account with sustaining many injuries in uninterrupted succession. When wrong has been done them in a single instance, he wishes them to be trained by this example to meek submission, that by suffering they may learn to be patient.

40. *And to him who wishes to enter into a law-suit with thee.* Christ now glances at another kind of annoyance, and that is, when wicked men torment us with law-suits. He commands us, even on such an occasion, to be so patient and submissive that, when our *coat* has been *taken away,* we shall be prepared to give up *our cloak also.* None but a fool will stand upon the words, so as to maintain, that we must yield to our opponents what they demand, before coming into a court of law: for such compliance would more strongly inflame

415 *Julian,* the Roman Emperor, generally known by the name of *Julian the Apostate.* The inveterate hatred of this man to the very name of our blessed Savior has gained him a painfully conspicuous place in ecclesiastical history. — *Ed.*

the minds of wicked men to robbery and extortion; and we know, that nothing was farther from the design of Christ. What then is meant by *giving the cloak to him* who endeavors, on the ground of a legal claim,[416] *to take away our coat?* If a man, oppressed by an unjust decision, loses what is his own, and yet is prepared, when it shall be found necessary, to part with the remainder, he deserves not less to be commended for patience than the man who allows himself to be twice robbed before coming into court. In short, when Christians meet with one who endeavors to wrench from them a part of their property, they ought to be prepared to lose the whole.

Hence we conclude, that Christians are not entirely prohibited from engaging in lawsuits, provided they have a just defense to offer. Though they do not surrender their goods as a prey, yet they do not depart from this doctrine of Christ, which exhorts us to bear patiently "the spoiling of our goods," (Hebrews 10:34.) It is, no doubt, rare to find a man who proceeds, with mild and proper feelings, to plead in a court: but, as it is possible for a man to defend a just cause with a view to the public advantage, we have no right to condemn the thing in itself, because it appears to be directed by improper feelings.

The different modes of expression which are employed by Matthew and Luke, make no alteration in the meaning. A *cloak* is usually of more value than a *coat:* and accordingly, when Matthew says, that we ought *to give a cloak to him who takes away a coat,* he means that, after having sustained a smaller loss, we ought to be prepared to endure a greater. What is stated by Luke agrees with the ancient proverb, "The coat is nearer than the cloak."[417]

Luke 6:30. *To every one that asketh of thee.* The same words, as we shall presently see, are found in Matthew: for it may readily be inferred from the context, that Luke does not here speak of a request to obtain assistance, but of actions at law, which bad men raise for the purpose of carrying off the property of others. *From him who takes away what are thine, ask them not again.* If it is thought better to read the two clauses separately, I have no objection: and then it will be an exhortation to liberality in giving. As to the second clause, in which Christ forbids us to *ask again* those things which have been unjustly taken away, it is undoubtedly an exposition of the former doctrine, that we ought to bear patiently "the spoiling of our goods." But we must remember what I have already hinted, that we ought not to quibble about words, as if a good man were not permitted to recover what is his own, when God gives him the lawful means. We are only enjoined to exercise patience, that we may not be unduly distressed by the loss of our property, but calmly wait, till the Lord himself shall call the robbers to account.

416 "Sous couleur de proceder par voye de justice;" — "under pretense of proceeding by way of justice."

417 "Que le saye est plus pres de la chair que le manteau." — "That the coat is nearer the flesh than the cloak."

MATTHEW 5:42; LUKE 6:34-35

Matthew 5:42	Luke 6:34-35
42. Give to him that asketh of thee: and from him who desires to borrow from thee, turn not thou away.	**34**. If you shall lend to those from whom you hope that you will receive, what kindness will it be in you? for sinners also lend to sinners, that they may receive the like. **35**. Lend ye, expecting nothing again, and your reward shall be great.

Matthew 5:42. *Give to him that asketh of thee.* Though the words of Christ, which are related by Matthew, appear to command us to give to all without discrimination, yet we gather a different meaning from Luke, who explains the whole matter more fully. First, it is certain, that it was the design of Christ to make his disciples generous, but not prodigals and it would be a foolish prodigality to scatter at random what the Lord has given us. Again, we see the rule which the Spirit lays down in another passage for liberality. Let us therefore hold, first, that Christ exhorts his disciples to be liberal and generous; and next, that the way of doing it is, not to think that they have discharged their duty when they have aided a few persons, but to study to be kind to all, and not to be weary of giving, so long as they have the means.

Besides, that no man may cavil at the words of Matthew, let us compare what is said by Luke. Christ affirms that when, in lending or doing other kind offices, we look to the mutual reward, we perform no part of our duty to God. He thus draws a distinction between charity and carnal friendship. Ungodly men have no disinterested affection for each other, but only a mercenary regard: and thus, as Plato judiciously observes, every man draws on himself that affection which he entertains for others. But Christ demands from his own people disinterested beneficence, and bids them study to aid the poor, from whom nothing can be expected in return. We now see what it is, to have an open hand to petitioners. It is to be generously disposed to all who need qur assistance, and who cannot return the favor.

Luke 6:35. *Lend, expecting nothing again.* It is a mistake to confine this statement to usury, as if Christ only forbade his people to be usurers. The preceding part of the discourse shows clearly, that it has a wider reference. After having explained what wicked men are wont to do, — to love their friends, — to assist those from whom they expect some compensations, — to lend to persons like themselves, that they may afterwards receive the like from them, — Christ proceeds to show how much more he demands from his people, — to love their enemies, to show disinterested kindness, to lend without expecting a return. We now see, that the word *nothing* is improperly explained as referring to usury, or to any interest

that is added to the principal:[418] whereas Christ only exhorts us to perform our duties freely, and tells us that mercenary acts are of no account in the sight of God.[419] Not that he absolutely condemns all acts of kindness which are done in the hope of a reward; but he shows that they are of no weight as a testimony of charity; because he alone is truly beneficent to his neighbors, who is led to assist them without any regard to his own advantage, but looks only to the necessities of each. Whether it is ever lawful for Christians to derive profit from lending money, I shall not argue at greater length under this passage, lest I should seem to raise the question unseasonably out of a false meaning which I have now refuted. Christ's meaning, as I have already explained, is simply this: When believers lend, they ought to go beyond heathens; or, in other words, they ought to exercise pure liberality.

418 "De l'usure et accroissement qui vient outre le principal;" — "of usury and increase which comes beyond the principal." On the lawfulnesss of lending money at interest, the most enlightened men, at the time when our author wrote, were strangley divded in sentiment. His own views were unfolded in a small work, which has been admired by competent judges for the purity of French style, and for enlarged views of *Political Economy.* After suffering not a little obloquy for his manner of applying the law of God to commercial questions, he has been vindicated by the unanimous opinion of posterity; and his performance, having served its purpose, has been quietly laid on the shelf. We allude to it only to account for the rapid and cursory manner in which he disposes here of a question, on which all who wish to know his opinions may satisfy themselves by perusing his own complete and elaborate statement of the argument. — *Ed.*

419 "Que les plaisirs lesquels les hommes se font les uns aux autres, sous esperance de recompense, ne viennent point en conte devant Dieu." — "That the gratifications which men give to each other, in expectation of reward, come not into reckoning before God."

MATTHEW 5:43-48; LUKE 6:27-36

Matthew 5:43-48	Luke 6:27-36
43. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love they neighbor, and thou shalt hate thy enemy. **44**. But I say to you, Love your enemies: bless those who curse you: do good to those that hate you: and pray for those who injure and persecute you: **45**. That you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and unjust. **46**. For if you shall love those who love you, what reward shall you have? **47**. And if you shall embrace your brethren only, what do you more? Do not the publicans thus? **48**. You shall, therefore, be perfect, as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.	**27**. But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies: do good to those who hate you. **28**. Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who injure you. (A little after.) **32**. And if you love those who love you, what good-will shall it be in you? for sinners also love those by whom they are loved. **33**. And if you shall do good to those who do good to you, what good-will shall it be in you? for sinners also do this. (Again a little after.) **35**. But love your enemies. (Again.) And ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind to the unthankful and evil. **36**. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Matthew 5:43. *Thou shalt love thy neighbor.* It is astonishing, that the Scribes fell into so great an absurdity, as to limit the word *neighbor* to benevolent persons: for nothing is more obvious or certain than that God, in speaking of our neighbors, includes the whole human race. Every man is devoted to himself; and whenever a regard to personal convenience occasions an interruption of acts of kindness, there is a departure from that mutual intercourse, which nature itself dictates. To keep up the exercise of brotherly love, God assures us, that all men are our brethren, because they are related to us by a common nature. Whenever I see a man, I must, of necessity, behold myself as in a mirror: for he is my *bone and my flesh,* (Genesis 29:14.) Now, though the greater part of men break off, in most instances, from this holy society, yet their depravity does not violate the order of nature; for we ought to regard God as the author of the union.

Hence we conclude, that the precept of the law, by which we are commanded to love our neighbor, is general. But the Scribes, judging of *neighborhood* from the disposition of the individual, affirmed that no man ought to be reckoned a *neighbor,* unless he were worthy of esteem on account of his own excellencies, or, at least, unless he acted the part of a friend. This is, no doubt, supported by the common opinion; and therefore the children of the world are not ashamed to acknowledge their resentments, when they have any reason to assign for them. But the charity, which God requires in his law, looks not at what a man has

deserved, but extends itself to the unworthy, the wicked, and the ungrateful. Now, this is the true meaning which Christ restores, and vindicates from calumny; and hence it is obvious, as I have already said, that Christ does not introduce new laws, but corrects the wicked glosses of the Scribes, by whom the purity of the divine law had been corrupted.

44. *Love your enemies.* This single point includes the whole of the former doctrine: for he who shall bring his mind to love those who hate him, will naturally refrain from all revenge, will patiently endure evils, will be much more prone to assist the wretched. Christ presents to us, in a summary view, the way and manner of fulfilling this precept, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,* (Matthew 22:39.) For no man will ever come to obey this precept, till he shall have given up self-love, or rather denied himself, and till men, all of whom God has declared to be connected with him, shall be held by him in such estimation, that he shall even proceed to love those by whom he is regarded with hatred.

We learn from these words, how far believers ought to be removed from every kind of revenge: for they are not only forbidden to ask it from God, but are commanded to banish and efface it from their minds so completely, as to *bless their enemies.* In the meantime, they do not fail to commit their cause to God, till he take vengeance on the reprobate: for they desire, as far as lies in them, that the wicked should return to a sound mind, that they may not perish; and thus they endeavor to promote their salvation. And there is still this consolation, by which all their distresses are soothed. They entertain no doubt, that God will be the avenger of obstinate wickedness, so as to make it manifest, that those who are unjustly attacked are the objects of his care. It is very difficult, indeed, and altogether contrary to the disposition of the flesh, to render good for evil. But our vices and weakness ought not to be pleaded as an apology. We ought simply to inquire, what is demanded by the law of charity: for, if we rely on the heavenly power of the Spirit, we shall encounter successfully all that is opposed to it in our feelings.

This is undoubtedly the reason why monks, and other bawlers of the same class, imagined that these were *advices,* and not precepts, given by Christ: for they took the strength of men as the standard, for ascertaining what they owe to God and to his law. And yet the monks were not ashamed to claim perfection for themselves, having voluntarily bound themselves to attend to his advices. How faithfully they support the title to which they lay claim I do not now say:[420] but the folly and absurdity of alleging, that they are only advices, will appear from many considerations. First, to say that he *advised* his disciples, but did not authoritatively command them, to do what was right, is to dishonor Christ. Secondly, to represent the duties of charity, which depend on the law, as matters on which they are left at liberty,

420 "Je ne touche point pour le present combien ils s'acquittent vaillament et fidelement de ce dont ils se vantent de paroles." — "I say nothing, for the present, as to the valiant and faithful manner in which they accomplish what they boast of in words."

is highly foolish.[421] Thirdly, the words ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, *but I say to you,* mean in this passage, "I denounce," or "I command," and cannot, with propriety, be rendered, "*I* advise." Lastly, that it is an express command of what must necessarily be obeyed, is proved, without any difficulty, from the words of Christ: for he immediately adds,

45. *That ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven.* When he expressly declares, that no man will be a child of God, unless he *loves those who hate him,* who shall dare to say, that we are not bound to observe this doctrine? The statement amounts to this, "Whoever shall wish to be accounted a Christian, let him *love his enemies."* It is truly horrible and monstrous, that the world should have been covered with such thick darkness, for three or four centuries, as not to see that it is an express command, and that every one who neglects it is struck out of the number of the children of God.

It ought to be observed that, when the example of God is held out for our imitation, this does not imply, that it would be becoming in us to do whatever God does. He frequently punishes the wicked, and drives the wicked out of the world. In this respect, he does not desire us to imitate him: for the judgment of the world, which is his prerogative, does not belong to us. But it is his will, that we should imitate his fatherly goodness and liberality. This was perceived, not only by heathen philosophers, but by some wicked despisers of godliness, who have made this open confession, that in nothing do men resemble God more than in doing good. In short, Christ assures us, that this will be a mark of our adoption, if we are *kind to the unthankful and evil.* And yet you are not to understand, that our liberality makes us the children of God: but the same Spirit, who is the *witness,* (Romans 8:16,) *earnest,* (Ephesians 1:14,) and *seal,* (Ephesians 4:30,) of our free adoption, corrects the wicked affections of the flesh, which are opposed to charity. Christ therefore proves from the effect, that none are the children of God, but those who resemble him in gentleness and kindness.

Luke says, *and you shall be the children of the Highest.* Not that any man acquires this honor for himself, or begins to be a *child of God,* when he *loves his enemies;* but because, when it is intended to excite us to do what is right, Scripture frequently employs this manner of speaking, and represents as a reward the free gifts of God. The reason is, he looks at the design of our calling, which is, that, in consequence of the likeness of God having been formed anew in us, we may live a devout and holy life. *He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.* He quotes two instances of the divine kindness toward us, which are not only well known to us, but common to all: and

421 "C'est une chose tant et plus absurde, que les devoirs de charite, qui dependent de la Loy, soyent mis en la liberte des hommes, de les faire, ou de les laisser." — "It is an exceedingly absurd thing, that the duties of charity, which depend on the Law, should be put in the power of men to do them, or to let them alone."

this very participation excites us the more powerfully to act in a similar manner towards each other, though, by a *synecdoche,*[422] he includes a vast number of other favors.

46. *Do not even the publicans the same?* In the same sense, Luke calls them *sinners,* that is, wicked and unprincipled men. Not that the office is condemned in itself; for the *publicans* were collectors of taxes, and as princes have a right to impose taxes, so it is lawful to levy them from the people. But they are so called, because men of this class are usually covetous and rapacious, nay, deceitful and cruel; and because among the Jews they were the agents of a wicked tyranny. If any one shall conclude from the words of Christ, that *publicans* are the basest of all men, he will argue ill, for our Lord employs the ordinary phraseology. His meaning is: those who are nearly devoid of humanity have some appearance of discharging mutual duties, when they see it to be for their own advantage.

48. *You shall therefore be perfect.* This *perfection* does not mean *equality,* but relates solely to resemblance.[423] However distant we are from the perfection of God, we are said to be *perfect, as he is perfect,* when we aim at the same object, which he presents to us in Himself. Should it be thought preferable, we may state it thus. There is no comparison here made between God and us: but the *perfection* of God means, *first,* that free and pure kindness, which is not induced by the expectation of gain; — and, *secondly,* that remarkable goodness, which contends with the malice and ingratitude of men. This appears more clearly from the words of Luke, *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful:* for *mercy* is contrasted with a mercenary regard, which is founded on private advantage.

422 "Combien qu'il comprend sous ces deux d'autres infinis tesmoignages, par une figure dont nous avons souvent parle, nommee Synecdoche." — "Though, under these two, he includes innumerable other testimonies, by a figure, of which we have frequently spoken, called *Synecdoche."*

423 "Ceste perfection ne signifie pas qu'il y ait une.equalite et mesme mesure, mais elle se rapporte seulement a quelque ressemblance ou ap-proche." — "That perfection does not mean that there is an equality or thee same measure, but it relates solely to some resemblance or approach."

MATTHEW 6: 1-4

Matthew 6:1-4
1. Beware lest ye do your alms before men, that you may be seen by them: otherwise you have not a reward with your Father who is in heaven. **2**. Therefore, when thou doest alms, let there not be a sound of trumpets before thee, as hypocrites do in synagogues and in streets, that they may be glorified by men. Verily I say to you, They have their reward. **3**. But when thou shalt do alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: **4**. That thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will reward thee openly.

1. *Beware* In this passage, Christ exhorts his people to devote themselves sincerely to good works; that is, to endeavor, with simplicity, to do what is right before God, and not to make a parade before men.[424] A very necessary admonition; for in all virtues the entrance of ambition is to be dreaded, and there is no work so laudable, as not to be in many instances corrupted and polluted by it. Under one class he lays down, by a *synecdoche,* a general doctrine: for he speaks of *alms* only, as he speaks shortly afterwards about *prayers:* though some copies, instead of ἐλεημοσύνην, *alms,* read δικαιοσύνην, *righteousness,* which is also the rendering of the old translator. But the difference is of little moment: for in either way there is no room to doubt, that the design is, to correct the disease of ambition, when, in doing what is right, we seek glory from men.

2. *When thou doest alms* He expressly reproves a long established custom, in which the desire of fame might not only be perceived by the eye, but felt by the hands. In places where streets or roads met, and in public situations, where large assemblies were wont to be held, they distributed alms to the poor. There was evident ostentation in that practice: for they sought crowded places, that they might be seen by multitudes, and, not satisfied with this, added even the sound of trumpets.[425] They pretended, no doubt, that it was to call the poor, as apologies are never wanting: but it was perfectly obvious, that they were hunting for applause and commendation. Now, when our service is rendered to the eyes of men, we do not submit our life to the judgment and approbation of God. Justly, therefore, does Christ say, that those persons, who exhibit themselves in this manner, *have their reward:* for they whose eyes are held by such vanity cannot look upon God.

424 "Sans chercher la louange des hommes;" —"without seeking the praise of men?"

425 There is no necessity for giving a literal acceptation to the *sounding of trumpets,* particularly as no trace of such a practice, so far as we are aware, is to be found in history. Similar phrases are used, in many languages, to denote, that ostentation has been carried far beyond the bounds of ordinary propriety. — *Ed.*

For the same reason, all who are desirous of vain-glory are called *hypocrites.* Profane authors gave the name of ὑποκριταὶ, *hypocrites,* to those who personated assumed characters in plays and on the stage; and Scripture has applied this term to men who are double in heart and insincere.[426] There are various kinds of *hypocrites.* Some, though conscious of being very wicked, impudently give themselves out for good men before the world, and endeavor to conceal their vices, of which they have an inward conviction. Others allow themselves to proceed to such a pitch of audacity, that they venture to claim even perfect righteousness before God. Others do good, not from a desire to do what is right, nor on account of the glory of God, but only to obtain for themselves fame and a reputation for holiness. This last mentioned class Christ now describes, and he properly calls them *hypocrites:* for, having no proper object in view in the performance of good works, they assume a different character, that they may appear to be holy and sincere worshippers of God.

3. *Let not thy left hand know* By this expression he means, that we ought to be satisfied with having God for our only witness, and to be so earnestly desirous to obey him, that we shall not be carried away by any vanity. It frequently happens, that men sacrifice to themselves rather than to God. Christ therefore wishes, that we should not be distracted by indirect thoughts, but go straight to this object, that we may serve God with a pure conscience.

4. *That thy alms may be in secret* This statement appears to be opposed to many passages of Scripture, in which we are commanded to edify the brethren by good examples. But if we attend to the design of Christ, we must not give a more extensive meaning to the words.[427] He commands his disciples to devote themselves to good works purely, and without any ambition. In order to do this, he bids them turn away their eyes from the sight of men, and

426 This is the true etymology of the word, and rests, not on conjecture, but on historical facts. ὑποκρίνεσθαι was used in the same sense as the more modern term ἀποκρίνεσθαι,, *to reply.* An actor was called ὁ ὑποκρινόμενος τῶ χορῶ, *one who replies to the chorus,* alluding to the form of the ancient dramas. The circuitous phrase was altered to ὑποκριτὴς, which was, for some time, used occasionally in a good sense, to denote "one who assumed, for a temporary purpose, a character different from his own;" but came afterwards to be uniformly used in a bad sense, as denoting "one who assumed a character which did not belong to him." It is a curious instance of the facility with which a word passes, by a few changes, into a meaning altogether different from what it originally bore; and may serve to show, how rashly some philologists have maintained, that in all the successive meanings of a word the generic idea may be traced. The second will resemble the first, and the third either the first or the second, and every new meaning will have an analogy to a former one, from which it has been derived: but it may happen that, ere long, all traces of the original meaning have disappeared. *To reply* and *to be insincere* are ideas which have no resemblance. — *Ed.*

427 "Verba longius trahere non oportet." In some of the best Latin editions we find, "verba longius trahere nos oportet," which entirely alters the meaning. But the discrepancy of the reading is set aside by the French version: "il ne faut point estendre les paroles plus avant;" — "we must not extend the words farther." — *Ed.*

to reckon it enough that their duties are approved by God alone. Such simplicity of views does not at all interfere with anxiety and zeal to promote edification: and, indeed, a little before, he did not expressly forbid them to do good before men, but condemned ostentation.

Thy Father, who seeth in secret He silently glances at a kind of folly, which prevails everywhere among men, that they think they have lost their pains, if there have not been many spectators of their virtues. He tells them, that God does not need a strong light to perceive good actions: for those things, which appear to be buried in darkness, are open to his view. We have no reason, therefore, to suppose that what escapes the notice, and receives not the testimony of men, is lost: for "the Lord dwells in the thick darkness," (2 Chronicles 6:1.) A most appropriate remedy is thus applied for curing the disease of ambition, when he reminds us to fix our *eye* on God: for this banishes from our minds, and will utterly destroy, all vain-glory. — In the second clause, which immediately follows, Christ reminds us that, in looking for the reward of good works, we must wait patiently till the last day, the day of resurrection. *Thy Father,* says he, *shall reward thee openly* But when? It will be, when the dawn of the last day shall arise, by which all that is now hidden in darkness shall be revealed.

MATTHEW 6:5-8

Matthew 6:5-8
5. And when thou shalt pray, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites: for they are wont to pray standing in the synagogues, and in corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Verily I say to you, that they have their reward. **6**. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and, having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret: and thyFather, who seeth secret, shall reward thee openly. **7**. But praying**,** use not vain repetitions, as the Heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard on account of their speaking much. **8**. Be not you, therefore, like them: for your Father knoweth what things ye need, before ye ask him.

5. *When thou shalt pray* He now gives the same instruction as to *prayer,* which he had formerly given as to *alms.* It is a gross and shameful profanation of the name of God, when hypocrites, in order to obtain glory from men, pray in public, or at least make a pretense of praying. But, as hypocrisy is always ambitious, we need not wonder that it is also blind. Christ, therefore, commands his disciples, if they wish to pray in a right manner, to *enter into their closet.* Some expositors, thinking that this has the appearance of absurdity, give it an allegorical turn, as referring to the inward recesses of the heart: but there is no necessity for such trifling. We are commanded, in many passages, to pray to God or to praise him, in the public assembly, amidst a crowd of men, and before all the people: and that for the purpose, not only of testifying our faith or gratitude, but also of exciting others, by our example, to do the like. Christ does not withdraw us from such an exercise, but only admonishes us to have God always before our eyes when we engage in prayer.

We must not literally interpret the words, *enter into thy closet:* as if he ordered us to avoid the presence of men, or declared that we do not pray aright, except when there are no witnesses. He speaks comparatively, and means, that we ought rather to seek retirement than desire a crowd of men to see us praying.[428] It is advantageous, indeed, to believers, and contributes to their pouring out, with greater freedom, their prayers and groans before God, to withdraw from the gaze of men. Retirement is also useful for another reason, that our minds may be more free and disengaged from all distracting thoughts: and accordingly Christ himself frequently chose the concealment of some retired spot for the sake of prayer. But this is not the present subject, which is only to correct the desire of vain-glory. To express it in a few words, whether a man prays alone, or in the presence of others, he ought to have

428 "Il parle ici par une forme de comparaison des deux extremitez opposites, signifiant que plustost il faut chercher d'estre seuls, que de desirer grande compagnie qui nous voye prier." — "He speaks here by way of comparison of the two opposite extremes, meaning that we must rather seek to be alone, than desire a large company to see us pray,"

the same feelings, as if he were shut up in his closet, and had no other witness but God. When Christ says, *thy Father shall reward thee,* he declares plainly that all the reward, which is promised to us in any part of Scripture, is not paid as a debt, but is a free gift.

7. *Use not vain repetitions* He reproves another fault in prayer, a multiplicity of words. There are two words used, but in the same sense: for βαττολογία is "a superfluous and affected repetition," and πολυλογία is "unmeaning talk." Christ reproves the folly of those who, with the view of persuading and entreating God, pour out a superfluity of words. This doctrine is not inconsistent with the praises everywhere bestowed in Scripture on earnestness in prayer: for, when prayer is offered with earnest feeling, the tongue does not go before the heart. Besides, the grace of God is not obtained by an unmeaning flow of words; but, on the contrary, a devout heart throws out its affections, like arrows, to pierce heaven. At the same time, this condemns the superstition of those who entertain the belief, that they will secure the favor of God by long murmurings. We find Popery to be so deeply imbued with this error, that it believes the efficacy of prayer to lie chiefly in talkativeness. The greater number of words that a man mutters, the more diligently he is supposed to have prayed. Long and tedious chanting also, as if it were to soothe the ears of God, continually resounds in their cathedrals.

8. *For your Father knoweth* This single remedy is sufficient for removing and destroying the superstition which is here condemned. For whence comes this folly of thinking that great advantage is gained, when men weary God by a multiplicity of words, but because they imagine that he is like a mortal man, who needs to be informed and solicited? Whoever is convinced, that God not only cares for us, but knows all our wants, and anticipates our wishes and anxieties before we have stated them, will leave out vain repetitions, and will reckon it enough to prolong his prayers, as far as shall be necessary for exercising his faith; but will reckon it absurd and ridiculous to approach God with rhetorical embellishments, in the expectation that he will be moved by an abundance of words.

But if God *knows what things we have need of, before we ask him,* where lies the advantage of prayer? If he is ready, of his own free will, to assist us, what purpose does it serve to employ our prayers, which interrupt the spontaneous course of his providence? The very design of prayer furnishes an easy answer. Believers do not pray, with the view of informing God about things unknown to him, or of exciting him to do his duty, or of urging him as though he were reluctant. On the contrary, they pray, in order that they may arouse themselves to seek him, that they may exercise their faith in meditating on his promises, that they may relieve themselves from their anxieties by pouring them into his bosom; in a word, that they may declare that from Him alone they hope and expect, both for themselves and for others, all good things. God himself, on the other hand, has purposed freely, and without being asked, to bestow blessings upon us; but he promises that he will grant them to our prayers. We must, therefore, maintain both of these truths, that He freely anticipates our wishes,

and yet that we obtain by prayer what we ask. As to the reason why he sometimes delays long to answer us, and sometimes even does not grant our wishes, an opportunity of considering it will afterwards occur.

MATTHEW 6:9-13; LUKE 11:1-4

Matthew 6:9-13	Luke 11:1-4
9. Pray ye therefore thus: Our Father who art in heaven, may thy name be sanctified. **10**. May thy kingdom come. May thy will be done, as in heaven, so also in the earth. **11**. Give us to-day our daily bread. **12**. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. **13**. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.	**1**. And it happened, while he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. **2**. And he saith to them, When you pray, say, Our Father who art in heaven, may thy name be sanctified. May thy kingdom come. May thy will be done, as in heaven, so also in the earth. **3**. Give us to.day our daily bread. **4**. And forgive us our sins, as we also forgive every one who owes us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

It is uncertain whether this form was once only or twice delivered by Christ to his disciples.[429] Some think that the latter is more probable; because Luke says that he was requested to do it, while Matthew represents him as teaching it of his own accord. But as we have said, that Matthew collects all the leading points of doctrine, in order that the whole amount of them may be more clearly perceived by the readers when they are placed in close succession, it is possible that Matthew may have omitted to mention the occasion which is related by Luke. On this subject, however, I am unwilling to debate with any person.

Luke 11:1 *As John also taught his diciples.* John delivered to his disciples a particular form of prayer; and he did so, in my opinion, because the time required it. The state of affairs among the Jews was, at that time, exceedingly corrupted. Every thing connected with religion had so miserably fallen, that we need not be surprised to find few among them, by whom prayer was offered in a proper manner.[430] Besides, it was proper, that the minds of believers should be excited, by prayer, to hope and desire the promised redemption, which was at hand. John might, therefore, have collected, out of various passages of Scripture, a certain

429 "Il est incertain si Christ a enseigne ceste formule de prier a ses disciples une fois seulement, ou bien par deux diverses fois." — "It is uncertain if Christ taught this form of prayer to his disciples once only, or rather at two separate times."

430 "Il ne se faut pas fort esbahir si la vraye et pure maniere de prier estoit pratiquee par bien peu de gens." — "We ought not to be greatly surprised, if the true and pure manner of praying was practiced by very few people."

prayer adapted to the time, and approaching more nearly to the spiritual kingdom of Christ, which had already begun to be revealed.

Matthew 6:9 *Do ye therefore pray thus* Instead of this Luke says, *when ye pray, say*: though Christ does not enjoin his people to pray in a prepared form of words,[431] but only points out what ought to be the object of all our wishes and prayers. He embraces, therefore, in six petitions what we are at liberty to ask from God. Nothing is more advantageous to us than such instruction. Though this is the most important exercise of piety, yet in forming our prayers, and regulating our wishes, all our senses fail us. No man will pray aright, unless his lips and heart shall be directed by the Heavenly Master. For that purpose he has laid down this rule, by which we must frame our prayers, if we desire to have them accounted lawful and approved by God. It was not the intention of the Son of God, (as we have already said), to prescribe the words which we must use, so as not to leave us at liberty to depart from the form which he has dictated. His intention rather was, to guide and restrain our wishes, that they might not go beyond those limits and hence we infer, that the rule which he has given us for praying aright relates not to the words, but to the things themselves.

This form of prayer consists, as I have said, of six petitions. The first three, it ought to be known, relate to the glory of God, without any regard to ourselves; and the remaining three relate to those things which are necessary for our salvation. As the law of God is divided into two tables, of which the former contains the duties of piety, and the latter the duties of charity,[432] so in prayer Christ enjoins us to consider and seek the glory of God, and, at the same time, permits us to consult our own interests. Let us therefore know, that we shall be in a state of mind for praying in a right manner, if we not only are in earnest about ourselves and our own advantage, but assign the first place to the glory of God: for it would be altogether preposterous to mind only what belongs to ourselves, and to disregard the kingdom of God, which is of far greater importance.

Our Father who art in heaven Whenever we engage in prayer, there are two things to be considered, both that we may have access to God, and that we may rely on Him with full and unshaken confidence: his fatherly love toward us, and his boundless power. Let us therefore entertain no doubt, that God is willing to receive us graciously, that he is ready to listen to our prayers, — in a word, that of Himself he is disposed to aid us. *Father* is the appellation given to him; and under this title Christ supplies us with sufficiently copious ma-

431 "Combien Christ ne commande pas aux siens en priant de s'attacher scrupuleusement a certains mots;" — "though Christ does not command his people to adhere scrupulously to certain words.

432 "Comme la Loy de Dieu est divisee en deux Tables, desquelles la premiere contient les choses dont nous sommes redevables a Dieu pour honorer sa majeste: la seconde ce que nous devons a nostre prochain selon charite." — "As the Law of God is divided into two Tables, of which the first contains the things which we owe to God to honor his majesty: the second, what we owe to our neighbor according to charity."

terials for confidence. But as it is only the half of our reliance that is founded on the goodness of God, in the next clause, *who art in heaven,* he gives us a lofty idea of the power of God. When the Scripture says, that God is *in heaven,* the meaning is, that all things are subject to his dominions, — that the world, and everything in it, is held by his hand, — that his power is everywhere diffused, — that all things are arranged by his providence. David says, "He that dwelleth in the heavens shall laugh at them," (Psalm 2:4); and again, "Our God is in heaven: he hath done whatever he hath pleased," (Psalm 115:3).

When God is said to be *in heaven,* we must not suppose that he dwells only there; but, on the contrary, must hold what is said in another passage, that "the heavens of heavens do not contain him," (2 Chronicles 2:6). This mode of expression separates him from the rank of creatures, and reminds us that, when we think of him, we ought not to form any low or earthly conceptions: for he is higher than the whole world. We have now ascertained the design of Christ. In the commencement of the prayer, he desired his own people to rest their confidence on the goodness and power of God; because, unless our prayers are founded on faith, they will be of no advantage. Now, as it would be the folly and madness of presumption, to call God our Father, *except* on the ground that, through our union to the body of Christ, we are acknowledged as his children, we conclude, that there is no other way of praying aright, but by approaching God with reliance on the Mediator.

May thy name be sanctified This makes still more manifest what I have said, that in the first three petitions we ought to lose sight of ourselves, and seek the glory of God: not that it is separated from our salvation, but that the majesty of God ought to be greatly preferred by us to every other object of solicitude. It is of unspeakable advantage to us that God reigns, and that he receives the honor which is due to him: but no man has a sufficiently earnest desire to promote the glory of God, unless (so to speak) he forgets himself, and raises his mind to seek God's exalted greatness. There is a close connection and resemblance between those three petitions. *The sanctification of the name of God* is always connected with his *kingdom;* and the most important part of his *kingdom* lies in *his will being done.* Whoever considers how cold and negligent we are in desiring the greatest of those blessings for which we are here commanded to pray, will acknowledge that nothing here is superfluous, but that it is proper that the three petitions should be thus distinguished.

To *sanctify the name of God* means nothing else, than to *give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name,* so that men may never think or speak of him but with the deepest veneration. The opposite of this is the *profanation* of the name of God, which takes place, when men either speak disrespectfully of the divine majesty, or at least without that reverence which they ought to feel. Now, the glory, by which it is *sanctified,* flows and results from the acknowledgments made by men as to the wisdom, goodness, righteousness, power, and all the other attributes of God. For holiness always dwells, and permanently remains, in God: but men obscure it by their malice and depravity, or dishonor and pollute it by sacrilegious

contempt. The substance of this petition is, that the glory of God may shine in the world, and may be duly acknowledged by men. But religion is in its highest purity and rigour, when men believe, that whatever proceeds from God is right and proper, full of righteousness and wisdom: for the consequence is, that they embrace his word with the obedience of faith, and approve of all his ordinances and works. That faith which we yield to the word of God is, so to speak, our subscription,[433] by which we "set to our seal that God is faithful," (John 3:33;) as the highest dishonor that can be done to him is unbelief and contempt of his word.

We now see, what wickedness is displayed by most men in judging of the works of God, and how freely they allow themselves to indulge in censure. If any of us are chastised, they grumble, and murmur, and complain, and some break out into open blasphemies: if he does not grant our wishes, we think that he is not sufficiently kind to us.[434] Many turn into matter of idle talk and jesting his incomprehensible providence and secret judgments. Even his holy and sacred name is often treated with the grossest mockery. In short, a part of the world profane his holiness to the utmost of their power. We need not then wonder, if we are commanded to ask, in the first place, that the reverence which is due to it may be given by the world. Besides, this is no small honor done to us, when God recommends to us the advancement of his glory.

10. *May thy kingdom come* Though the Greek verb (ἐλθέτω) is simple, yet if, instead of *May thy kingdom come,* we read, as it was rendered in the old translation, *May thy kingdom arrive,*[435] the meaning will remain unchanged. We must first attend to the definition of the *kingdom* of God. He is said to *reign* among men, when they voluntarily devote and submit themselves to be governed by him, placing their flesh under the yoke, and renouncing their desires. Such is the corruption of the nature, that all our affections are so many soldiers of Satan, who oppose the justice of God, and consequently obstruct or disturb his *reign.* By this prayer we ask, that he may remove all hindrances, and may bring all men under his dominion, and may lead them to meditate on the heavenly life.

This is done partly by the preaching of the word, and partly by the secret power of the Spirit. It is his will to govern men by his word: but as the bare voice, if the inward power of the Spirit be not added, does not pierce the hearts of men, both must be joined together, in order that the *kingdom* of God may be established. We therefore pray that God would exert his power, both by the Word and by the Spirit, that the whole world may willingly submit

433 "Comme si nous signions de nostre propre main, declarans que Dieu est veritable;" — "as if we signed with our own hand, declaring that God is true."

434 "Il nous semble qu'il nous fait tort;" — "we think that he wrongs us."

435 "Adveniat regnum tuum;" the only difference being, that the compound verb *adveniat, may arrive,* has been exchanged for the simple verb *veniat, may come,* a change which has been adopted, so far as I have observed, in the modern European versions. — *Ed.*

to him. The *kingdom* of God is opposed to all disorder (ἀταξία) and confusion for good order is nowhere found in the world, except when he regulates by his hand the schemes and dispositions of men. Hence we conclude, that the commencement of the *reign* of God in us is the destruction of the old man, and the denial of ourselves, that we may be renewed to another life.

There is still another way in which God reigns; and that is, when he overthrows his enemies, and compels them, with Satan their head, to yield a reluctant subjection to his authority, "till they all be made his footstools" (Hebrews 10:13.) The substance of this prayer is, that God would enlighten the world by the light of his Word, — would form the hearts of men, by the influences of his Spirit, to obey his justice, and would restore to order, by the gracious exercise of his power, all the disorder that exists in the world. Now, he commences his reign by subduing the desires of our flesh. Again, as the *kingdom* of God is continually growing and advancing to the end of the world, we must pray every day that it *may come:* for to whatever extent iniquity abounds in the world, to such an extent *the kingdom of God,* which brings along with it perfect righteousness, is not yet *come.*

May thy will be done Although the *will* of God, viewed in itself, is one and simple, it is presented to us in Scripture under a twofold aspect.[436] It is said, that the will of God is done, when he executes the secret counsels of his providence, however obstinately men may strive to oppose him. But here we are commanded to pray that, in another sense, *his will may be done,* — that all creatures may obey him, without opposition, and without reluctance. This appears more clearly from the comparison, *as in heaven* For, as He has the angels constantly ready to execute his commands, (and hence they are said to *do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word,* Psalm 103:20,) so we desire that all men may have their will formed to such harmony with the righteousness of God, that they may freely bend in whatever direction he shall appoint. It is, no doubt, a holy desire, when we bow to the *will* of God, and acquiesce in his appointments. But this prayer implies something more. It is a prayer, that God may remove all the obstinacy of men, which rises in unceasing rebellion against him, and may render them gentle and submissive, that they may not wish or desire any thing but what pleases him, and meets his approbation.

But it may be objected: Ought we to ask from God what, he declares, will never exist to the end of the world? I reply: When we pray that the earth may become obedient to the will of God, it is not necessary that we should look particularly at every individual. It is enough for us to declare, by such a prayer as this, that we hate and regret whatever we perceive to be contrary to the will of God, and long for its utter destruction, not only that it may be the rule of all our affections, but that we may yield ourselves without reserve, and with all cheerfulness, to its fulfillment.

436 "Elle nous est proposee en deux sortes es Escritures." — "It is presented to us in two ways in the Scriptures."

11. *Give us today our daily bread* Of the form of prayer which Christ has prescribed to us this may be called, as I have said, the Second Table. I have adopted this mode of dividing it for the sake of instruction.[437] The precepts which relate to the proper manner of worshipping God are contained in the First Table of the law, and those which relate to the duties of charity in the Second. Again, in this prayer, — "I have formerly divided it thus, in order to instruct more familiarly." our Lord first instructs us to seek the glory of God, and then points out, in the second part, what we ought to ask for ourselves. But it must be observed, that the prayers which we offer for our salvation, or for our own advantage, ought to have this for their ultimate object: for we must not be so exclusively occupied with what is advantageous to ourselves, as to omit, in any instance, to give the first place to the glory of God. When we pray, therefore, we must never turn away our eyes from that object.

There is this difference, however, between the two kinds of petitions which we have mentioned. When we pray for *the kingdom of God* and the *sanctification of his name,* our eyes ought to be directed upwards, so as to lose sight of ourselves, and to be fixed on God alone. We then come down to ourselves, and connect with those former petitions, which look to God alone, solicitude about our own salvation. Though the *forgiveness of sins* is to be preferred to food,[438] as far as the soul is more valuable than the body, yet our Lord commenced with *bread* and the supports of an earthly life, that from such a beginning he might carry us higher. We do not ask that our daily bread may be given to us before we ask that we may be reconciled to God, as if the perishing food of the belly were to be considered more valuable than the eternal salvation of the soul: but we do so that we may ascend, as it were by steps, from earth to heaven. Since God condescends to nourish our bodies, there can be no doubt whatever, that he is far more careful of our spiritual life. This kind and gentle manner of treating us raises our confidence higher.

Some are of opinion, that τὸν ἄζτον ἡμῶν ἐπιούσιον means *our supersubstantial bread* This is exceedingly absurd. The reason assigned by Erasmus is not only frivolous, but inconsistent with piety. He reckons it improbable that, when we come into the presence of God, Christ should enjoin us to make mention of food. As if this manner of instruction were not to be found in every part of Scripture, to lead us to the expectation of heavenly blessings, by giving us a taste of temporal blessings. It is indeed the true proof of our faith, when we ask nothing but from God, and not only acknowledge him to be the only fountain of all blessings, but feel that his fatherly kindness extends to the smallest matters, so that he does not disdain to take care even of our flesh.

437 "Je l'ay ainsi divisee par ci devant pour enseigner plus familierement."

438 "Combien que la remission des pechez est bien a preferer a la nourriteurde cette vie." — "though the forgiveness of sins is greatly to be preferred to the nourishment of this life."

That Christ speaks here of bodily food may easily be inferred: first, because otherwise the prayer would be defective and incomplete. We are enjoined, in many passages, to throw all our cares into the bosom of God, and he graciously promises, that "he will withhold from us no good thing," (Psalm 84:11.) In a perfect rule of prayer, therefore, some direction must be laid down as to the innumerable wants of the present life. Besides, the word σήμερον, *today,* means that we are to ask from God no more than is necessary for the day:[439] for there is no doubt, that he intended to restrain and guide our desire of earthly food, to which we are all immoderately addicted. Again, a very frequent Synecdoche occurs in the word *bread,* under which the Hebrews include every description of food. But here it has a still more extensive meaning: for we ask not only that the hand of God may supply us with food, but that we may receive all that is necessary for the present life.

The meaning is now obvious. We are first commanded to pray, that God would protect and cherish the life which he has given to us in the world, and, as we need many supports, that he would supply us with every thing that he knows to be needful. Now, as the kindness of God flows in uninterrupted succession to feed us, the bread which he bestows is called ἐπιούσιος, that is, continual:[440] for so it may be rendered. This word suggests to us such a

439 "Sinon au pris que le jour vient l'un apres l'autre;" — "only as far as one day comes after another."

440 "Superveniens;" — "survenant, ou venant par chacun jour;"— "succeeding, or coming by each day." We subjoin an extract from the Dissertations of *Witsius* on the Lord's Prayer. After mentioning several views of Commentators on this petition, he says: This great variety of expositions has been principally occasioned by the Greek word ἐπιούσιος. That word occurs nowhere else in Scripture, and the most learned men have been unable to discover it in any profane writings. As it is not known to what Hebrew word employed by our Lord it corresponds, it is not surprising that different persons should have assigned to it different acceptations. — I shall not now enter into a critical examination of the very numerous expositions of that word which have been given by learned men. An exposition more copious and learned than any that had previously appeared, has been given by a very celebrated and learned man, JOHN MARCK, formerly my much esteemed colleague in the University of Friesland. It forms a part of his *Juvenile Dissertations,* as he is pleased to style them, but which contain much profound wisdom. The simplest and most probable of the various etymologies, I have always thought, is that which supposes ἐπιόσιος to be compounded of ἐπὶ and οὐσία, as περιούσιος is compounded of περὶ and οὐσία The analogy of composition of such words presents no difficulty: for it does not require that the ι in the word ἐπὶ shall be dropped before a vowel. This is proved by the words ἐπιεικὴς, ἐπιόγδοος, ἐπιόρκος, ἐπιόπτομαι, ἐπιοῦρος, and many of the same form. This derivation being granted, which has nothing unusual or anomalous, considerable progress has been made in the investigation of the subject. For as τὸ περιούσιον signifies *what is more than enough,* and beyond what the preservation of existence requires, so τὸ ἐπιούσιον signifies what is enough. Such is the meaning assigned to it by the ancient Greek writers, who were deeply skilled in their own language. " ⌧⌧Αρτου ἐπιούσιον, (says Chrysostom, Hom. 30, Ton. 5.) τουτέστιν ἐπὶ τὴν οὐσίαν τοῦ σώματος διαζαίνοντα, καὶ συγκρατῶσαι ταύτην δυνάμενον, — "that is, what passes *to the substance* of the body, and is able to support it." Ζητεῖν προσετάχθημεν , (says Gregory Nyssen,) τὸ πρὸν τὴν συντήρησιν ἐξαρκοῦν τῶν

petition as the following: "O Lord, since our life needs every day new supplies, may it please thee to grant them to us without interruption." The adverb *today,* as I said a little ago, is added to restrain our excessive desire, and to teach us, that we depend *every* moment on the kindness of God, and ought to be content with that portion which he gives us, to use a common expression, "from day to day."

But here an objection may be urged. It is certain, that Christ has given a rule for prayer, which belongs equally to all the godly. Now, some of their number are rich men, who have their yearly produce laid up in store. Why does he command them to ask what they have at home, and to ask every day those things of which they have an abundant supply for a year? The reply is easy. These words remind us that, unless God feed us daily, the largest accumulation of the necessaries of life will be of no avail. Though we may have abundance of corn, and wine, and every thing else, unless they are watered by the secret blessing of God, they will suddenly vanish, or we will be deprived of the use of them, or they will lose their natural power to support us, so that we shall famish in the midst of plenty. There is therefore no reason to wonder, if Christ invites the rich and poor indiscriminately to apply to their Heavenly Father for the supply of their wants. No man will sincerely offer such a prayer as this, unless he has learned, by the example of the Apostle Paul, "to be full and to be hungry, to abound and to suffer need," (Philippians 4:12,) to endure patiently his poverty or his humble condition, and not to be intoxicated by a false confidence in his abundance.

Does any one inquire, why we ask that bread to be given to us, which we call *OUR bread?* I answer: It is so called, not because it belongs to us by right, but because the fatherly kindness of God has set it apart for our use. It becomes *ours,* because our Heavenly Father freely bestows it on us for the supply of our necessities. The fields must, no doubt, be cultivated, labor must be bestowed on gathering the fruits of the earth, and every man must submit to the toil of his calling, in order to procure food. But all this does not hinder us from being fed by the undeserved kindness of God, without which men might waste their strength to no purpose. We are thus taught, that what we seem to have acquired by our own industry is his gift. We may likewise infer from this word, that, if we wish God to feed us, we must not take what belongs to others: for all who have been *taught of God,* (John 6:45,) whenever they employ this form of prayer, make a declaration that they desire nothing but what is their own.

σωματικῶν οὐσίαν "We have been commanded to seek what is sufficient for the support of the bodily existence." Basil explains it to be τὸν πρὸς τὴν ἐφήμερον ζωὴν τῶ οὐσία ἡμῶν χρησιμεύοντα, "what is useful to our existence for daily life." (After referring to *Suiceri Thesaurus,* and quoting from Cyril of Alexandria and from Theodoret, he concludes ἄρτον ἐπιούσιον to be equivalent to the phrase used by the Apostle James, (2: 15,) τὴν ἐφήμερον τροφὴν, *(daily food)—Biblic*a1 Cabinet, vol. 24, pp. 266, 272-274. — *Ed.*

12. *And forgive us our debts* Here it may be proper that we should be reminded of what I said a little before, that Christ, in arranging the prayers of his people, did not consider which was first or second in order. It is written, that our prayers are as it were a wall which hinders our approach to God, (Isaiah 59:2,) or a cloud which prevents him from beholding us, (Isaiah 44:22,) and that

> "he hath covered himself with a cloud, that our
> prayer should not pass through," (Lamentations 3:44.)

We ought always, therefore, to begin with the forgiveness of sins: for the first hope of being heard by God beams upon us, when we obtain his favor; and there is no way in which he is "pacified toward us," (Ezekiel 16:63,) but by freely pardoning our sins. Christ has included in two petitions all that related to the eternal salvation of the soul, and to the spiritual life: for these are the two leading points of the divine covenant, in which all our salvation consists. He offers to us a free reconciliation by "not imputing our sins," (2 Corinthians 5:19,) and promises the Spirit, to engrave the righteousness of the law on our hearts. We are commanded to ask both, and the prayer for obtaining the forgiveness of sins is placed first.

In Matthew, sins are called *debts,* because they expose us to condemnation at the tribunal of God, and make us *debtors;* nay more, they alienate us entirely from God, so that there is no hope of obtaining peace and favor except by pardon. And so is fulfilled what Paul tells us, that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23,)

> "that every mouth may be stopped, and all the
> world may become guilty before God," (Romans 3:19.)

For, though the righteousness of God shines, to some extent, in the saints, yet, so long as they are surrounded by the flesh, they lie under the burden of sins. None will be found so pure as not to need the mercy of God, and if we wish to partake of it, we must feel our wretchedness. Those who dream of attaining such perfection in this world, as to be free from every spot and blemish, not only renounce their sins, but renounce Christ himself, from whose Church they banish themselves. For, when he commands all his disciples to betake themselves to him daily for the forgiveness of sins, every one, who thinks that he has no need of such a remedy, is struck out of the number of the disciples.

Now, the forgiveness, which we here ask to be bestowed on us, is inconsistent with satisfaction, by which the world endeavors to purchase its own deliverance. For that creditor is not said to *forgive,* who has received payment and asks nothing more,—but he who willingly and generously departs from his just claim, and frees the *debtor* The ordinary distinction between *crime* and *punishment* has no place here: for *debts* unquestionably mean liability to punishment. If they are freely forgiven us, all compensations must disappear. And there is no other meaning than this in the passage of Luke, though he calls them *sins:* for in no

other way does God grant the pardon of them, than by removing the condemnation which they deserve.

As we forgive our debtors This condition is added, that no one may presume to approach God and ask forgiveness, who is not pure and free from all resentment. And yet the forgiveness, which we ask that God would give us, does not depend on the forgiveness which we grant to others: but the design of Christ was, to exhort us, in this manner, to forgive the offenses which have been committed against us, and at the same time, to give, as it were, the impression of his seal, to ratify the confidence in our own forgiveness. Nor is any thing inconsistent with this in the phrase used by Luke, καὶ γὰρ, for *we also* Christ did not intend to point out the cause, but only to remind us of the feelings which we ought to cherish towards brethren, when we desire to be reconciled to God. And certainly, if the Spirit of God reigns in our hearts, every description of ill-will and revenge ought to be banished. The Spirit is the *witness* of our adoption, (Romans 8:16,) and therefore this is put down simply as a mark, to distinguish the children of God from strangers. The name *debtors* is here given, not to those who owe us money, or any other service, but to those who are *indebted to us* on account of offenses which they have committed.

13. *And lead us not into temptation* Some people have split this petition into two. This is wrong: for the nature of the subject makes it manifest, that it is one and the same petition. The connection of the words also shows it: for the word *but,* which is placed between, connects the two clauses together, as Augustine judiciously explains. The sentence ought to be resolved thus, *That we may not be led into temptation, deliver us from evil* The meaning is: "We are conscious Of our own weakness, and desire to enjoy the protection of God, that we may remain impregnable against all the assaults of Satan." We showed from the former petition, that no man can be reckoned a Christian, who does not acknowledge himself to be a sinner; and in the same manner, we conclude from this petition, that we have no strength for living a holy life, except so far as we obtain it from God. Whoever implores the assistance of God to overcome temptations, acknowledges that, unless God *deliver* him, he will be constantly falling.[441]

The word *temptation* is often used generally for any kind of trial. In this sense God is said to have *tempted Abraham,* (Genesis 22:1,) when he tried his faith. We are *tempted* both by adversity and by prosperity: because each of them is an occasion of bringing to light feelings which were formerly concealed. But here it denotes inward *temptation,* which may be fitly called the scourge of the devil, for exciting our lust. It would be foolish to ask, that God would keep us free from every thing which makes trial of our faith. All wicked emotions, which excite us to sin, are included under the name of *temptation* Though it is not impossible that we may feel such pricks in our minds, (for, during the whole course of our life, we have

441 "Afin qu'i! ne trebusche pas a chacun coup;" — "that he may not reel at every blow."

a constant warfare with the flesh,) yet we ask that the Lord would not cause us to be thrown down, or suffer us to be overwhelmed, by *temptations*

In order to express this truth more clearly, that we are liable to constant stumbling and ruinous falls, if God does not uphold us with his hand, Christ used this form of expression, *(*μὴ εἰσενέγκῇς*) Lead us not into temptation:* or, as some render it, *Bring us not into temptation* It is certainly true, that "every man is tempted," as the Apostle James says, (1:14) "by his own lust:" yet, as God not only gives us up to the will of Satan, to kindle the flame of lust, but employs him as the agent of his wrath, when he chooses to drive men headlong to destruction, he may be also said, in a way peculiar to himself, to *lead them into temptation* In the same sense, "an evil spirit from the Lord" is said to have "seized or troubled Saul," (1 Samuel 16:14:) and there are many passages of Scripture to the same purpose. And yet we will not therefore say, that God is the author of evil: because, by giving men over to a reprobate mind," (Romans 1:28,) he does not exercise a confused tyranny, but executes his just, though secret[442] judgments.

Deliver us from evil The word *evil* (πονηροῦ) may either be taken in the neuter gender, as signifying *the evil thing,* or in the masculine gender, as signifying *the evil one Chrysostom* refers it to the Devil, who is the contriver of every thing evil, and, as the deadly enemy of our salvation, is continually fighting against us.[443] But it may, with equal propriety, be explained as referring to *sin* There is no necessity for raising a debate on this point: for the meaning remains nearly the same, that we are in danger from the devil and from sin, if the Lord does not protect and *deliver* us.

For thine is the kingdom It is surprising that this clause, which agrees so well with the rest of the prayer, has been left out by the Latins:[444] for it was not added merely for the purpose of kindling our hearts to seek the glory of God, and of reminding us what ought to

442 "Combien que la raison nous en soit incognue;" — "though the reason of them may be unknown to us."

443 Chrysostom's words are: — Πονηρὸν ἐνταῦθα τὸν διάζολον καλεῖ Κατ ᾽ ἐξοχὴν δὲ οἱτος ἐκεῖνος καλεῖται διὰ τὴν ὑπερζολὴν τῶς κακίας, καὶ ἐπειδὰν μηδὲν παρ ᾽ ἡμῶν ἀδικηθεὶς ἄσπονδον πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἔχει τὸυ πόλεμον. "He calls *the Devil,* in this place, THE EVIL ONE. He is, by way of eminence, so called, on account of his superlative wickedness, and because, though he has received no injury from us, he carries on against us an implacable war." — *Ed.*

444 That part of the Lord's Prayer, which we commonly call *the conclusion,* is not found in the Gospel by Luke, and its genuineness has been questioned. None of the Latin copies (as Calvin mentions) have it: but even those who have most zealously maintained that it is spurious, admit that it exists in the greater number of the Greek manuscripts. Erasmus, Grotius, Witsius, Griesbach, Matthaei, and Scholz, may be consulted by those who wish to examine the question for themselves, and to hear all that has been said on both sides. Any thing like the summing up of the argument here would exceed the limits of a note. — *Ed.*

be the object of our prayers; but likewise to teach us, that our prayers, which are here dictated to us, are founded on God alone, that we may not rely on our own merits.

MATTHEW 6:14-15; Mark 11:25-26

Matthew 6:14-15	Mark 11:25-26
14. For if you shall forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. **15**. But if you shall not forgive men their trespasses, neither will you Father forgive your trespasses.	**25**. And when ye shall stand praying, forgive, if you have any thing against any one, that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses. **26**. But if you shall not forgive, neither will your Father, who is in heaven, forgive you your trespasses.

Here Christ only explains the reason why that condition was added, *Forgive us, as we forgive* The reason is, that God will not be ready to hear us, unless we also show ourselves ready to grant forgiveness to those who have offended us. If we are not harder than iron, this exhortation ought to soften us, and render us disposed to forgive offenses.[445] Unless God pardon us every day many sins, we know that we are ruined in innumerable ways: and on no other condition does he admit us to pardon, but that we pardon our brethren whatever offenses they have committed against us. Those who refuse to forget the injuries which have been done to them, devote themselves willingly and deliberately to destruction, and knowingly prevent God from forgiving them.[446]

445 "Pour nous rendre faciles a oublier les injures qu'on nous a faites." — "To make us ready to forget the injuries which have been done to us."

446 "Et de propos delibere veulent que Dieu procede contre eux en toute rigueur;" — "and deliberately resolve that God may proceed against them to the utmost rigor."

MATTHEW 6:16-19

Matthew 6:16-18

16. Moreover, when you shall fast, be not, like the hypocrites, dejected: [447] for they disfigure their faces, that it may be evident to men that they fast. Verily I say to you, they have their reward. **17**. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, **18**. That it may not appear to men that thou fastest, but to thy Father, who is in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will reward thee openly.

He again returns to the former doctrine: for, having begun to rebuke vain ostentation in alms and prayer, he laid down, before proceeding farther, the rule for praying in a right manner. The same injunction is now given to his disciples about *fasting,* which he had formerly given about *prayers* and *alms,* not to be too solicitous to obtain the applause of spectators, but to have God as the witness of their actions. When he bids them *anoint their head, and wash their face,* his language is hyperbolical:[448] for Christ does not withdraw us from one kind of hypocrisy, to lead us into another.[449] He does not enjoin us to counterfeit splendor, or exhort us to temperance in food in such a manner, as to encourage the luxuries of ointments and of dress: but merely exhorts us to preserve moderation, without any thing new or affected;—in short, that the fastings, in which we engage, should make no change in our accustomed way of living.

Thy Father will reward thee When he promises a reward from God *to fastings,* this mode of expression, as we said a little before with respect to prayer, is not strictly accurate. There is a wide difference, indeed, between *prayer* and *fastings* Prayer holds the first rank among the antics of piety: but fasting is a doubtful operation, and does not, like *alms,* belong to the class of those actions which God requires and approves. It is pleasing to God, only so far as it is directed to another object: and that is, to train us to abstinence, to subdue the lust of the flesh, to excite us to earnestness in prayer, and to testify our repentance, when we are affected by the view of the tribunal of God. The meaning of Christ's words is: "God will one day show that he was pleased with those good works, which appeared to be lost, because they were concealed from the eyes of men."

447 "D'un regard triste, ou, *visage chagrin;"* — "of a sad look, or, *distressed countenance* "

448 "C'est une facon de parler hyperbolique, c'est a dire, excessive." — "It is a *hyperbolical,* that is, an *exaggerated* way of speaking."

449 "Pour nous faire retomber en 1'autre;" — "to make us fall into the other."

MATTHEW 6:19-21; LUKE 12:33-34

Matthew 6:19-21	Luke 12:33-34
19. Lay not up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where rust and the moth consume, where theives break through and steal. **20**. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth consumes, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. **21**. For where your treasure shall be, there will also your heart be.	**33**. Sell what ye possess, and give alms. Prepare for yourselves bags, which do not grow old, a treasure in heaven which does not fail, where the theif approaches not, nor moth corrupteth. **34**. For where your treasure shall be, there will also your heart be.

Matthew 6:19. *Lay not up.* This deadly plague reigns everywhere throughout the world. Men are grown mad with an insatiable desire of gain. Christ charges them with folly, in collecting wealth with great care, and then giving up their happiness to *moths* and to *rust,* or exposing it as a prey to thieves. What is more unreasonable than to place their property, where it may perish of itself, or be carried off by men?[450] Covetous men, indeed, take no thought of this. They lock up their riches in well-secured chests, but cannot prevent them from being exposed to *thieves* or to *moths* They are blind and destitute of sound judgment, who give themselves so much toil and uneasiness in amassing wealth, which is liable to putrefaction, or robbery, or a thousand other accidents: particularly, when God allows us a place *in heaven for laying up a treasure,* and kindly invites us to enjoy riches which never perish.

20. *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven* They are said to do so, who, instead of entangling themselves in the snares of this world, make it their care and their business to meditate on the heavenly life. In Luke's narrative, no mention is made of the contrast between *laying up treasures on the earth* and *laying up treasures in heaven;* and he refers to a different occasion for the command of Christ *to prepare bags, which do not grow old:* for he had previously said, *Sell what you possess, and give alms* It is a harsh and unpleasant thing for men to strip themselves of their own wealth; and with the view of alleviating their uneasiness, he holds out a large and magnificent hope of remuneration. Those who assist their poor brethren *on the earth lay up for themselves treasures in heaven,* according to the saying of Solomon, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again,"
(Proverbs 19:17.)

450 "Ou bien perir d'eux-mesmes, encores que personne n'y touche;" — "or even perish of themselves, though nobody touch them."

The command to *sell possessions* must not be literally interpreted, as if a Christian were not at liberty to retain any thing for himself. He only intended to show, that we must not be satisfied with bestowing on the poor what we can easily spare, but that we must not refuse to part with our estates, if their revenue does not supply the wants of the poor. His meaning is, "Let your liberality go so far as to lessen your patrimony, and dispose of your lands."

21. *Where your treasure shall be* By this statement Christ proves that they are unhappy men who have their treasures laid up on the earth: because their happiness is uncertain and of short duration. Covetous men cannot be prevented from breathing in their hearts a wish for heaven: but Christ lays down an opposite principle, that, wherever men imagine the greatest happiness to be, there they are surrounded and confined. Hence it follows, that they who desire to be happy in the world[451] renounce heaven. We know how carefully the philosophers conducted their inquiries respecting the supreme good.[452] It was the chief point on which they bestowed their labor, and justly: for it is the principle on which the regulation of our life entirely depends, and the object to which all our senses are directed. If honor is reckoned the supreme good, the minds of men must be wholly occupied with ambition: if money, covetousness will immediately predominate: if pleasure, it will be impossible to prevent men from sinking into brutal indulgence. We have all a natural desire to pursue happiness;[453] and the consequence is, that false imaginations carry us away in every direction. But if we were honestly and firmly convinced that our happiness is in

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451 "Ceux qui demandent d'estre riches et a leur aise en ce monde;"— those who are eager to be rich and at their ease in this world."

452 "Nous savons comment les Philosophes se sont amusez a traiter subtilemerit du souverain bien des hommes." — "We know to what trouble the Philosophers submitted in ingenious discussions about the supreme good of men." — "The allusion is chiefly to the Greeks: for the philosophy of the Romans was at second hand, though nothing can be more ingenious or beautiful than the reasonings of Cicero in his Dissertations "*De* Finibus Bonorum et Malorum." He inquires into the τέλος, or *end,* of good and evil actions. In examining the principles of Epicurus, he professes to feel very much at ease, but approaches the Stoics with greater respect, and acknowledges the ability with which they had conducted their argument. The perusal of the whole treatise will gratify a reader prepared to accompany powerful minds in their most intricate researches, or to hail abstruse disquisition clothed in the choicest language by one who, as Robert Hall said of Pascal, "can invest the severest logic with the charms of the most beautiful composition, and render the most profound argumentation as entertaining as a romance." But those studies have a far higher value. When we see the greatest minds tasked to their utmost strength, and yet utterly failing to discover, by unassisted reason, the path which leads to happiness, we appreciate more highly Leland's argument "On the advantage and necessity of Divine Revelation," and bless the name of the Great Prophet, *who hath brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel,* (2 Timothy 1:10.) — *Ed.*

453 "Car naturellement nous tendons tous a desirer ce qui nous semble estre le souverain bien." — "For we have all a natural tendency to desire what appears to us to be the supreme good."

heaven, it would be easy for us to trample upon the world, to despise earthly blessings, (by the deceitful attractions of which the greater part of men are fascinated,) and to rise towards heaven. For this reason Paul, with the view of exciting believers to look upwards, and of exhorting them to meditate on the heavenly life, (Colossians 3:1,) presents to them Christ, in whom alone they ought to seek perfect happiness; thus declaring, that to allow their souls to grovel on the earth would be inconsistent and unworthy of those whose *treasure is in heaven*

MATTHEW 6:22-24; LUKE 11:34-36; 16:13

Matthew 6:22-24	Luke 11:34-36
22. The light [454] of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye shall be simple, thy whole body shall be luminous. **23**. But if thine eye shall be evil, thy whole body shall be dark. Therefore, if the light which is in thee is darkness, how great is that darkness! **24**. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or he will hold to one, and neglect the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.	**34**. The light [455] of the body is the eye: if thine eye therefore shall be simple, thy whole body shall be luminous: but if it shall be evil, thy whole body also shall be dark. **36**. If therefore thy whole body shall be luminous, not having any part dark, the whole shall be luminous, as when a candle enlightens thee by its brightness. Luke 16:13 **13.** No servant can serve two master: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

Matthew 6:22. *The light of the body is the eye* We must bear in mind, as I have already hinted, that what we find here are detached sentences, and not a continued discourse. The substance of the present statement is, that men go wrong through carelessness, because they do not keep their eye fixed, as they ought to do, on the proper object. For whence comes it, that they so shamefully wander, or dash themselves, or stumble, but because, having corrupted their judgment by choosing rather to follow their own lusts than the righteousness of God, they not only extinguish the light of reason, which ought to have regulated their life, but change it altogether into darkness.

When Christ calls *the eye the light of the body,* [456] he employs a comparison which means, that neither the hands, nor the feet, nor the belly, serves to direct men in walking, but that the eye alone is a sufficient guide to the rest of the members. If the hands and feet are foolishly and improperly directed, the blame of the mistake ought to be charged on the eyes, which do not perform their duty. We must now apply this comparison to the mind. The affections may be regarded individually as its members: but as they are blind in themselves, they need

455 "La chandelle;" — "the candle."

454 "La lumiere, *ou, lanterne*;" — "the light, or, *lantern* "

456 "Appelant l'ceil le flambeau ou la lampe de tout le corps;" — "calling the eye the torch or the lamp of the whole body."

direction. Now, God has given reason to guide them, and to act the part of a *lantern* in showing them the way. But what is the usual result? All the soundness of judgment which had been given to men is corrupted and perverted by themselves, so that not even one spark of light continues to dwell in them.

A simple eye means an eye that has no speck, or diseased humor, or any other defect. *An evil eye* (πονηρὸν)[457] means a *diseased eye*. A luminous body means one that is *enlightened,* so as to have all its actions properly regulated. A *dark* body is one which is led into numerous mistakes by a confused movement. We see, then, as I have already said, that these words reprove the indolence of men, who neglect to open their eyes for the guidance of their affections.

The inference which the Papists draw from this passage, that men possess as much reason and wisdom, as to be free to choose either good or evil, is mere trifling. For Christ does not here inform us what ability we possess, but how we ought to walk, by having our eye fixed on a certain object; and at the same time shows, that the whole course of human life is dark, because no man proposes for himself a proper object, but all permit themselves to pursue eagerly what is evil. I confess, indeed, that men naturally possess reason, to distinguish between vices and virtues; but I say that it is so corrupted by sin, that it fails at every step. Meanwhile, it does not follow, that men do not voluntarily bring darkness on themselves, as if they shut their eyes to avoid the light which was offered to them, because they are knowingly and willingly carried after their own lusts.

23. *If the light which is in thee be darkness* Light signifies that small portion of reason, which continues to exist in men since the fall of Adam: and *darkness* signifies gross and brutal affections. The meaning is, we ought not to wonder, if men wallow so disgracefully, like beasts, in the filth of vices, for they have no reason which might restrain the blind and dark lusts of the flesh. *The light* is said to be turned into *darkness,* not only when men permit the wicked lusts of the flesh to overwhelm the judgment of their reason, but also when they give up their minds to wicked thoughts, and thus degenerate into beasts. For we see how wickedly men change into craft any measure of wisdom which had been given them, how they "dig deep (as the prophet says) to hide their counsel from the Lords" (Isaiah 29:15,) how they trust to their own resources, and openly dishonor God; in a word, how desirous they are to show their ingenuity, in innumerable ways, for their own destruction. Christ has good grounds for declaring, that thick and appalling darkness must of necessity reign in the life of men, when they choose to be blind.

457 This Greek word has two meanings, which depend on accentuation. The *proparoxytone* πονηρὸς means *laborious, troublesome:* but the *oxytone* πονηρὸς means *wicked* Here, when applied to *the eye,* it cannot denote moral blame, but easily takes the transferred sense of *faulty, defective. — Ed*

This is also the meaning of the words which are found in the Gospel of Luke, with this difference, that Christ there connects the present statement with one which was formerly explained, that *men do not light a candle, and put it under a bushel*, (Matthew 5:15) and again, instead of this clause, *if the light which is in thee be darkness,* gives the exhortation, *see that the light which is in thee be not darkness* The meaning is, "See that thy mind, which ought to have shone, like a candle, to guide all thy actions, do not darken and mislead thy whole life." He afterwards adds, that, when *the body is enlightened by the eye,* the greatest regularity is found in all its members, as *the light of a candle* spreads and penetrates into every part of the room.

24. *No man can serve two masters* Christ returns to the former doctrine, the object of which was to withdraw his disciples from covetousness. He had formerly said, that the heart of man is bound and fixed upon its tr*easure;* and he now gives warning, that the hearts of those who are devoted to riches are alienated from the Lord. For the greater part of men are wont to flatter themselves with a deceitful pretense, when they imagine, that it is possible for them to be divided between God and their own lusts. Christ affirms that it is impossible for any man to obey God, and, at the same time, to obey his own flesh. This was, no doubt, a proverb in common use: *No man can serve two masters* He takes for granted a truth which had been universally admitted, and applies it to his present subject: where riches hold the dominion of the heart, God has lost his authority. True, it is not impossible that those who are rich shall serve God; but whoever gives himself up as a slave to riches must abandon the service of God: for covetousness makes us the slaves of the devil.

I have inserted here what is related on a different occasion by Luke: for, as the Evangelists frequently introduce, as opportunity offers, passages of our Lord's discourses out of their proper order, we ought to entertain no scruple as to the arrangement of them. What is here said with a special reference to riches, may be properly extended to every other description of vice. As God pronounces everywhere such commendations of sincerity, and hates *a double heart,* (1 Chronicles 12:33; Psalm 12:2,) all are deceived, who imagine that he will be satisfied with the half of their heart. All, indeed, confess in words, that, where the affection is not entire, there is no true worship of God: but they deny it in fact, when they attempt to reconcile contradictions. "I shall not cease," says an ambitious man, "to serve God, though I devote a great part of my mind to hunting after honors." The covetous, the voluptuaries, the gluttons, the unchaste, the cruel, all in their turn offer the same apology for themselves: as if it were possible for those to be partly employed in serving God, who are openly carrying on war against him. It is, no doubt, true, that believers themselves are never so perfectly devoted to obedience to God, as not to be withdrawn from it by the sinful desires of the flesh. But as they groan under this wretched bondage, and are dissatisfied with themselves, and give nothing more than an unwilling and reluctant service to the flesh, they are not said to *serve two masters:* for their desires and exertions are approved by the Lord, as if they rendered to

him a perfect obedience. But this passage reproves the hypocrisy of those who flatter themselves in their vices, as if they could reconcile light and darkness.

MATTHEW 6:25-30; LUKE 12:22-28

Matthew 6:25-30	Luke 12:22-28
25. Therefore I say to you, Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat and drink, or for you body, what clothes you shall wear: is not the life of more value than food, and the body of more value than clothing? **26**. Look at the fowls of heaven, for they neither sow nor reap, nor collect into granaries, and your heavenly Father feedeth them: are you not more excellent than they are? **27**. And which of you, by anxious care, can add to his stature one cubit? **28**. And why are you anxious about clothing? Con sider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin. **29**. But I say to you, That even Solomon in all hs glory [458] was not clothed like one of these. **30**. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is today, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?	**22**. And he said to his disciples, Therefore I say to you, be not anxious about your life, what you shall eat, nor for the body, with what you shall be clothed. **23**. The life is of more value than food, and the body is of more value than clothing. **24**. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have granary nor barn, and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? **25**. And which of you, by anxious care, can add to your stature on cubit? **26**. If therefore you cannot do even that which is least, why are ye anxious about the rest? **27**. Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil or spin. And I say to you, Even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. **28**. And if God thus clothes the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more shall he clothe you, O you of little faith?

Throughout the whole of this discourse, Christ reproves that *excessive* anxiety, with which men torment themselves, about food and clothing, and, at the same time, applies a remedy for curing this disease. When he forbids them to be *anxious,* this is not to be taken literally, as if he intended to take away from his people all care. We know that men are born on the condition of having some care; and, indeed, this is not the least portion of the miseries, which the Lord has laid upon us as a punishment, in order to humble us. But immoderate care is condemned for two reasons: either because in so doing men tease and vex themselves to no purpose, by carrying their anxiety farther than is proper or than their calling demands; or because they claim more for themselves than they have a right to do, and place such a reliance on their own industry, that they neglect to call upon God. We ought to remember this promise: though unbelievers shall "rise up early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of sorrows," yet believers will obtain, through the kindness of God, rest

458 "En toute sa gloire, *ou, avec toute sa gloire*;" — "in all his glory, or, *with all his glory* "

and sleep, (Psalm 127:2.) Though the children of God are not free from toil and anxiety, yet, properly speaking, we do not say that they are anxious about life: because, through their reliance on the providence of God, they enjoy calm repose.

Hence it is easy to learn, how far we ought to be *anxious about food* Each of us ought to labor, as far as his calling requires and the Lord commands; and each of us ought to be led by his own wants to call upon God. Such anxiety holds an intermediate place between indolent carelessness and the unnecessary torments by which unbelievers kill themselves. But if we give proper attention to the words of Christ, we shall find, that he does not forbid every kind of care, but only what arises from distrust. Be *not anxious,* says he, *what you shall eat, or what you shall drink* That belongs to those who tremble for fear of poverty or hunger, as if they were to be in want of food every moment.

Matthew 6:25. *Is not the life of more value than food?* He argues from the greater to the less. He had forbidden them to be excessively anxious about the way in which life might be supported; and he now assigns the reason. The Lord, who has given life itself, will not suffer us to want what is necessary for its support. And certainly we do no small dishonor to God, when we fail to trust that he will give us necessary food or clothing; as if he had thrown us on the earth at random. He who is fully convinced, that the Author of our life has an intimate knowledge of our condition, will entertain no doubt that he will make abundant provision for our wants. Whenever we are seized by any fear or anxiety about food, let us remember, that God will take care of the life which he gave us.

26. *Look at the fowls of the air* This is the remedy I spoke of, for teaching us to rely on the providence of God: for of all cares, which go beyond bounds, unbelief is the mother. The only cure for covetousness is to embrace the promises of God, by which he assures us that he will take care of us. In the same manner, the Apostle, wishing to withdraw believers from *covetousness,* confirms that doctrine: *for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,* (Hebrews 13:5.) The substance of the exhortation is, that we ought to trust in God, by whom none of his own people, however mean their condition may be, are disregarded.

Your heavenly Father feedeth them This deserves careful attention: for, though we are unable to explain the manner in which their life is supported, which of us is in the habit of considering that their life depends on the providence of God, which he is pleased to extend even to them? But if it is thoroughly fixed in our minds, *that the fowls* are supplied with food by the hand of God, there will be no difficulty in expecting it for ourselves, who are formed after his image, and reckoned among his children. *They neither sow nor reap* By these words it is far from being our Lord's intention to encourage us to indolence and sluggishness. All that he means is, that, though other means fail, the providence of God is alone sufficient for us, for it supplies the animals abundantly with every thing that they need.

Instead *of fowls,* (τὰ πετεινὰ,) Luke uses the word *ravens,* (τοὺς κόρακας,) alluding perhaps to that passage in the Psalms, *who giveth food to the young ravens that call upon him,* (Psalm 67: 9.) Some think that David expressly mentioned *the ravens,* because they are immediately deserted by their parents,[459] and therefore must have their food brought to them by God. Hence it is evident, that Christ intended nothing more than to teach his people to throw all their cares on God.

27. *Which of you by anxious care, etc ?* Here our Lord condemns another fault, which is almost always connected with immoderate anxiety about food: and that is, when a mortal man, claiming more than he has a right to do, does not hesitate, in sacrilegious hardihood, to go beyond his limits.

"O Lord, I know (says Jeremiah) that the way of man is not in himself it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps,"

(Jeremiah 10:23.)

You scarcely meet with one person in a hundred, who does not venture to make any promises that he thinks fit on his own industry and power. The consequence is, that those who take credit to themselves for their prosperity, do not hesitate to lose sight of God, when they enter into any undertaking. To restrain this mad rashness, Christ tells us, that whatever contributes to the support of our life depends wholly on the blessing of God. The meaning is: "It is foolish in men to weary themselves, because all our labors are unnecessary and fruitless, and all our anxieties are to no purpose, unless so far as God blesses them." This is more clearly expressed by Luke, *If you cannot do even that which is least, why are you anxious about the rest?* These words show plainly, that Christ reproves not only distrust, but pride, because men ascribe much more than they ought to their own skill.

29. *Not even Solomon in all his glory* This means, that the kindness of God, which is gloriously displayed in herbs and flowers, exceeds all that men can accomplish by their wealth or power, or in any other way. Believers ought to be convinced that, though all means fail, they will want nothing that is necessary for their full satisfaction, provided they continue to enjoy the blessing of God alone. *O you of little faith* In this respect Christ justly accuses us of deficiency or weakness of faith: for the more powerfully we are affected, according to our own grovelling views, by anxiety about the present life, the more do we show our unbelief, if every thing does not happen to our wish. Many persons, accordingly, who in great prosperity appear to possess faith or at least to have a tolerable share of it, tremble when any danger of poverty presents itself.

459 "Pource que le pere et 1a mere les abandonnent incontinent qu'ils sont nais;" — "because their parents forsake them as soon as they are born."

MATTHEW 6:31-34; LUKE 12:29-32

Matthew 6:31-34	Luke 12:29-32
31. Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or with what shall we be clothed? **32**. For all those things the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things. **33**. But rather seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. **34**. Be not therefore anxious about tomorrow: for to-morrow will take care of itself. Its own affliction is sufficient for the day.	**29**. And seek not what you shall eat, or what you shall drink, and be not lifted on high. **30**. For all these things the nations of the world seek: and your Father knoweth that you have need of these things. **31**. But rather seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added to you. **32**. Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

This has the same object with the former doctrine. Believers ought to rely on God's fatherly care, to expect that he will bestow upon them whatever they feel to be necessary, and not to torment themselves by unnecessary anxiety.

He forbids them to be *anxious,* or, as Luke has it, to *seek,* that is, to *seek* in the manner of those who look around them in every direction, without looking at God, on whom alone their eye ought to be fixed; who are never at ease, but when they have before their eyes an abundance of provisions; and who, not admitting that the protection of the world belongs to God, fret and tease themselves with perpetual uneasiness.

Matthew 6:32. *For all those things the Gentiles seek* This is a reproof of the gross ignorance, in which all such anxieties originate. For how comes it, that unbelievers never remain in a state of tranquillity, but because they imagine that God is unemployed, or asleep, in heaven, or, at least, that he does not take charge of the affairs of men, or feed, as members of his family, those whom he has admitted to his friendship. By this comparison he intimates, that they have made little proficiency, and have not yet learned the first lessons of godliness, who do not behold, with the eyes of faith, the hand of God filled with a hidden abundance of all good things, so as to expect their food with quietness and composure. *Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of those things:* that is, "All those persons who are so anxious about food, give no more honor, than unbelievers do, to the fatherly goodness and secret providence of God."

Luke 12:29. *And be not lifted on high*[460] This clause corresponds to the last sentence in the passage taken from Matthew, Be *not anxious about tomorrow* Our Lord now charges them with another fault. When men wish to make arrangements in their own favor, they

460 "Ne soyez en suspens;" — "be not in suspense."

would willingly embrace five centuries.[461] The verb μετεωρίζεσθαι, which Luke employs, properly signifies *to survey from a lofty situation,* or, as we commonly say, to make long discourses:[462] for the intemperate desires of the flesh are never satisfied without making a hundred revolutions of heaven and earth. The consequence is, that they leave no room for the providence of God. This is a reproof of excessive curiosity; for it leads us to bring upon ourselves uneasiness to no purpose, and voluntarily to make ourselves miserable *before the time,* (Matthew 8:29.) The expression used by Matthew, *its own affliction is sufficient for the day,* directs believers to moderate their cares, and not to attempt to carry their foresight beyond the limits of their calling: For, as we have said, it does not condemn every kind of care, but only that which wanders, by indirect and endless circuits, beyond limits.

Matthew 6:33. *But rather seek first the kingdom of God* This is another argument for restraining excessive anxiety about food. It argues a gross and indolent neglect of the soul, and of the heavenly life. Christ reminds us that there is the greatest inconsistency in men, who are born to a better life, being wholly employed about earthly objects. He who assigns the first rank to *the kingdom of God,* will not carry beyond moderation his anxiety about food. Nothing is better adapted to restrain the wantonness of the flesh from breaking out in the course of the present life, than meditation on the life of the heavens. The word *righteousness* may be either understood as applying to *God,* or to *the kingdom:*[463] for we know that the kingdom of God consists in *righteousness,* (Romans 14:17,) that is, in the newness of spiritual life. *All other things shall be added* This means, that those things which relate to the present life are but favorable appendages, and ought to be reckoned greatly inferior to *the kingdom of God*

Luke 12:32. *Fear not, little flock* By this declaration our Lord strengthens the confidence to which he had exhorted his people: for how would God refuse worthless and perishing food to those whom he has adopted as heirs of his *kingdom?* And he expressly calls his own people *a little flock,* to hinder them from thinking that they are of less value in the sight of God, because, on account of their small numbers, they are held in little estimation before the world. The verb εὐδοκεῖν conveys the idea, that eternal life flows to us from the fountain of undeserved mercy. For the same purpose the word *give* is added. When Christ plainly declares, that God *hath given us the kingdom,* and for no other reason, but because it so

461 "Embrasseroyent volontiers beaucoup de cent annees;" — "would willingly embrace many hundreds of years."

462 "Regarder en haut, et estendre sa veue bien loin: ce qu'on dit communement, Faire de longs discours, ou estre en suspens, comme aussi nous l'avons traduit." — "To look from on high, and to extend one's view very far: as we commonly say, To make long discourses, or *to be in suspense,* as we have also translated it."

463 On the latter supposition, we would naturally have expected that, instead of τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ, we would have had τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτῶς, when αὐτῶς would have stood for τῶς βασιλείας. — *Ed.*

pleased him, it is perfectly manifest, that it is not obtained by any merits of works. At whatever time the Lord raises our minds to the expectation of eternal life, let us remember, that we have no cause for fear as to daily food.

MATTHEW 7:1-5; MARK 4:24; LUKE 6:37-42

Matthew 7:1-5	Mark 4:24	Luke 6:37-42
1. Judge not, that you may not be judged. **2**. For with what judgment you judge you shall be judged, and with what measure you measure, it shall be measured to you again. **3**. And why seest thou the straw, which is in thy brother's eye, and perceivest not the beam which is in thine eye? **4**. Or how shall thou say to thy brother, Allow me to pull the straw out of thine eye, and, behold, a beam is in thine eye? **5**. Hypocrites, cast out first the beam out of thine eye, and then thou shall see clearly, that thou mayest pull out the straw from they brother's eye.	**24** With what measure you measure, the same shall be measured to you.	**37**. Judge not, and you shall not be judged: condemn not, and you shall not be condemned: forgive, and it shall be forgiven to you. **38**. Give, and it shall be given to you. Good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall they give into your bosom: for the same measure, with which you measure, shall be measured again to you. (Again.) **41**. And why seest thou a straw in thy brother's eye, and perceivest not a beam which is in thine own eye? **42**. Or how will thou be able to say to thy brother, Brother, allow me to pull out the straw which is in thine eye, while thou seest not the beam which is in thine eye? Hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine eye, and then thou shalt see clearly, that thou mayest cast out the straw which is in thy brother's eye.

Matthew 7:1. *Judge not* These words of Christ do not contain an absolute prohibition *from judging,* but are intended to cure a disease, which appears to be natural to us all. We see how all flatter themselves, and every man passes a severe censure on others. This vice is attended by some strange enjoyment: for there is hardly any person who is not tickled with the desire of inquiring into other people's faults. All acknowledge, indeed, that it is an intol-

erable evil, that those who overlook their own vices are so inveterate against their brethren. The Heathens, too, in ancient times, condemned it in many proverbs. Yet it has existed in all ages, and exists, too, in the present day. Nay, it is accompanied by another and a worse plague: for the greater part of men think that, when they condemn others, they acquire a greater liberty of sinning.

This depraved eagerness for biting, censuring, and slandering, is restrained by Christ, when he says, *Judge not*. It is not necessary that believers should become blind, and perceive nothing, but only that they should refrain from an undue eagerness to *judge:* for otherwise the proper bounds of rigor will be exceeded by every man who desires to pass sentence on his brethren. There is a similar expression in the Apostle James, *Be not many masters,* (James 3:1.) for he does not discourage or withdraw believers from discharging the office of teachers, but forbids them to desire the honor from motives of ambition. To *judge,* therefore, means here, to be influenced by curiosity in inquiring into the actions of others. This disease, in the first place, draws continually along with it the injustice of condemning any trivial fault, as if it had been a very heinous crime; and next breaks out into the insolent presumption of looking disdainfully at every action, and passing an unfavourable judgment on it, even when it might be viewed in a good light.

We now see, that the design of Christ was to guard us against indulging excessive eagerness, or peevishness, or malignity, or even curiosity, in *judging our* neighbors. He who *judges* according to the word and law of the Lord, and forms *his judgment* by the rule of charity, always begins with subjecting himself to examination, and preserves a proper medium and order in his *judgments*. Hence it is evident, that this passage is altogether misapplied by those persons who would desire to make that moderation, which Christ recommends, a pretence for setting aside all distinction between good and evil. We are not only permitted, but are even bound, to condemn all sins; unless we choose to rebel against God himself, — nay, to repeal his laws, to reverse his decisions, and to overturn his judgment-seat. It is his will that we should proclaim the sentence which he pronounces on the actions of men: only we must preserve such modesty towards each other, as to make it manifest that he is the only *Lawgiver and Judge,* (Isaiah 33:22.)

That you may not be judged He denounces a punishment against those severe judges, who take so much delight in sifting the faults of others. They will not be treated by others with greater kindness, but will experience, in their turn, the same severity which they had exercised towards others. As nothing is dearer or more valuable to us than our reputation, so nothing is more bitter than to be condemned, or to be exposed to the reproaches and infamy of men. And yet it is by our own fault that we draw upon ourselves that very thing which our nature so strongly detests, for which of us is there, who does not examine too severely the actions of others; who does not manifest undue rage against slight offenses; or who does not peevishly censure what was in itself indifferent? And what is this but deliber-

ately to provoke God, as our avenger, to treat us in the same manner. Now, though it is a just judgment of God, that those who have judged others should be punished in their turn, yet the Lord executes this punishment by the instrumentality of men. Chrysostom and others limit this statement to the present life: but that is a forced interpretation. Isaiah threatens (33:1) that *those who have spoiled others shall be spoiled.* In like manner, our Lord means, that there will be no want of executioners to punish the injustice and slander of men with equal bitterness or severity. And if men shall fail to receive punishment in this world, those who have shown undue eagerness in condemning their brethren will not escape the judgment of God.

Luke 6:37, 38. *Forgive, and it shall be forgiven to you. Give, and it shall be given to you.* This promise, which is added by Luke, means, that the Lord will cause him, who is indulgent, kind, and just to his brethren, to experience the same gentleness from others, and to be treated by them in a generous and friendly manner. Yet it frequently happens, that the children of God receive the very worst reward, and are oppressed by many unjust slanders; and that, to when they have injured no man's reputation, and even spared the faults of brethren. But this is not inconsistent with what Christ says: for we know, that the promises which relate to the present life do not always hold, and are not without exceptions. Besides, though the Lord permits his people, when innocent, to be unjustly oppressed and almost overwhelmed, he fulfils what he says in another place, that "their uprightness shall break forth as the morning,"[464] (Isaiah 58:8.) In this way, his blessing always rises above all unjust slanders. He subjects believers to unjust reproaches, that he may humble them, and that he may at length maintain the goodness of their cause. It ought also to be taken into the account, that believers themselves, though they endeavor to act justly towards their brethren, are sometimes carried away by excessive severity against brethren, who were either innocent, or not so greatly to be blamed, and thus, by their own fault, provoke against themselves a similar judgment. If they do not receive g*ood measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over,* though this is chargeable on the ingratitude of the world, yet they ought to acknowledge that it was partly deserved: for there is no man who is so kind and indulgent as he ought to be towards his brethren.

Matthew 7:3. *And why seest thou the straw?* He expressly touches upon a fault, which is usually found in hypocrites. While they are too quick-sighted in discerning the faults of others, and employ not only severe, but intentionally exaggerated, language in describing them, they throw their own sins behind their back, or are so ingenious in finding apologies for them, that they wish to be held excusable even in very gross offenses. Christ therefore reproves both evils: the excessive sagacity, which arises from a defect of charity, when we

464 In the French version our Author quotes a similar passage from the book of Psalms, (37:6;) "and he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the *noon-day* " — *Ed*

sift too closely the faults of brethren, and the indulgence by which we defend and cherish our own sins.

MATTHEW 7:6

Matthew 7:6
6. Give not that which is holy to the dogs, and do not throw down your pearls before swine, lest these trample them under their feet, and those turn and tear you.

6. *Give not that which is holy* It is unnecessary to repeat oftener, that Matthew gives us here detached sentences, which ought not to be viewed as a continued discourse. The present instruction is not at all connected with what came immediately before, but is entirely separate from it. Christ reminds the Apostles, and, through them, all the teachers of the Gospel, to reserve the treasure of heavenly wisdom for the children of God alone, and not to expose it to unworthy and profane despisers of his word.

But here a question arises: for he afterwards commanded to *preach the Gospel to every creature,* (Mark 16:15;) and Paul says, that the preaching of it is *a deadly savor to wicked men,* (2 Corinthians 2:16;) and nothing is more certain than that it is every day held out to unbelievers, by the command of God, for a testimony, that they may be rendered the more inexcusable. I reply: As the ministers of the Gospel, and those who are called to the office of teaching, cannot distinguish between the children of God and *swine,* it is their duty to present the doctrine of salvation indiscriminately to all. Though many may appear to them, at first, to be hardened and unyielding, yet charity forbids that such persons should be immediately pronounced to be desperate. It ought to be understood, that *dogs* and *swine* are names given not to every kind of debauched men, or to those who are destitute of the fear of God and of true godliness, but to those who, by clear evidences, have manifested a hardened contempt of God, so that their disease appears to be incurable. In another passage, Christ places the *dogs* in contrast with the elect people of God and the household of faith, *It is not proper to take the children's bread, and give it to dogs,* (Matthew 15:27.) But by *dogs* and *swine* he means here those who are so thoroughly imbued with a wicked contempt of God, that they refuse to accept any remedy.

Hence it is evident, how grievously the words of Christ are tortured by those who think that he limits the doctrine of the Gospel to those only who are teachable and well-prepared. For what will be the consequence, if nobody is invited by pious teachers, until by his obedience he has anticipated the grace of God? On the contrary, we are all by nature unholy, and prone to rebellion. The remedy of salvation must be refused to none, till they have rejected it so basely when offered to them, as to make it evident that they are reprobate and *self-condemned, (*αὐτοκατάκριτοι,*)* as Paul says of *heretics,* (Titus 3:11.)

There are two reasons, why Christ forbade that the Gospel should be offered to lost despisers. It is an open profanation of the mysteries of God to expose them to the taunts of wicked men. Another reason is, that Christ intended to comfort his disciples, that they might

not cease to bestow their labors on the elect of God in teaching the Gospel, though they saw it wantonly rejected by wicked and ungodly men. His meaning is lest this inestimable treasure should be held in little estimation, *swine* and *dogs* must not be permitted to approach it. There are two designations which Christ bestows on the doctrine of salvation: he calls it *holy,* and compares it to *pearls*. Hence we learn how highly we ought to esteem this doctrine.

Lest these trample them under their feet Christ appears to distinguish between the *swine* and the *dogs:* attributing brutal stupidity to the *swine,* and rage to the *dogs* And certainly, experience shows, that there are two such classes of despisers of God. Whatever is taught in Scripture, for instance, about the corrupt nature of man, free justification, and eternal election, is turned by many into an encouragement to sloth and to carnal indulgence. Such persons are fitly and justly pronounced to be *swine* Others, again, *tear* the pure doctrine, and its ministers, with sacrilegious reproaches, as if they threw away all desire to do well, all fear of God, and all care for their salvation. Although he employs both names to describe the incurable opponents of the Word of God, yet, by a twofold comparison, he points out briefly in what respect the one differs from the other.

MATTHEW 7:7-11; LUKE 11:5-13

Matthew 7:7-11	Luke 11:5-13
7. Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. **8**. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. **9**. Is there any man among you, who, if his son shall ask bread, will give him a ston? **10**. Or if he shall ask a fish, does he offer him a serpent? **11**. If you, then, though you are evil, know to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father, who is in heaven, give good things, if you ask them from him?	**5**. And he saith to them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and shall say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves: **6**. For a friend of mine hath come, on a journey, to me, and I have nothing to set before him. [465] **7**. And he from within answering say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed: I cannot rise and give thee. **8**. I say to you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet, on account of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. **9**. And I say to you, Aks, and it shall be given you: seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. **10**. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. **11**. And what father among you, from whom if his son shall ask bread, will give him a stone? Or, if a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? **12**. Or, if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? **13**. If you, then, though you are evil, know to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?

Matthew 7:7. *Ask, and it shall be given you* It is an exhortation to prayer: and as in this exercise of religion, which ought to be our first concern, we are so careless and sluggish, Christ presses the same thing upon us under three forms of expression. There is no superfluity of language, when he says, *Ask, seek, knock:* but lest the simple doctrine should be unimpressive, he perseveres in order to rouse us from our inactivity. Such is also the design of the promises that are added, Ye *shall find, it shall be given to you, and it shall be opened* Nothing

465 "Car un mien ami m'est venu voir en passant;" — "for a friend of mine has come to see."

is better adapted to excite us to prayer than a full conviction that we shall be heard. Those who doubt can only pray in an indifferent manner; and prayer, unaccompanied by faith, is an idle and unmeaning ceremony. Accordingly, Christ, in order to excite us powerfully to this part of our duty, not only enjoins what we ought to do, but promises that our prayers shall not be fruitless.

This ought to be carefully observed. First, we learn from it, that this rule of prayer is laid down and prescribed to us, that we may be fully convinced, that God will be gracious to us, and will listen to our requests. Again, whenever we engage in prayer, or whenever we feel that our ardor in prayer is not sufficiently strong, we ought to remember the gentle invitation, by which Christ assures us of God's fatherly kindness. Each of us, trusting to the grace of Christ, will thus attain confidence in prayer, and will venture freely to call upon God

"through Jesus Christ our Lord, in whom (as Paul says)
we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him,"
(Ephesians 3:11,12.)

But, as we are too prone to distrust, Christ, in order to correct this fault also, repeats the promise in a variety of words. He uses the metaphor *seek,* because we think, that those things which our wants and necessities require are far distant from us — and *knock,* because our carnal senses imagine, that those things which are not immediately at hand are shut up.

8. *For every one that asketh receiveth* Some think that this is a proverbial saying taken from common life: but I am more inclined to a different view. Christ presents the grace of his Father to those who pray. He tells us, that God is of himself prepared to listen to us, provided we pray to him, and that his riches are at our command, provided we ask them. These words imply, that those who are destitute of what is necessary, and yet do not resort to this remedy for their poverty, are justly punished for their slothfulness. It is certain, indeed, that often, when believers are asleep, God keeps watch over their salvation, and anticipates their wishes. Nothing could be more miserable for us than that, amidst our great indifference, or—I would rather say—amidst our great stupidity, God were to wait for our prayers, or that, amidst our great thoughtlessness, he were to take no notice of us. Nay more, it is only from himself that he is induced to bestow upon us faith, which goes before all prayers in order and in time. But as Christ here addresses disciples, he merely reminds us in what manner our heavenly Father is pleased to bestow upon us his gifts. Though he gives all things freely to us, yet, in order to exercise our faith, he commands us to pray, that he may grant to our requests those blessings which flow from his undeserved goodness.

9. *Is there any man among you?* It is a comparison from the less to the greater. First, our Lord contrasts the malice of men with the boundless goodness of God. Self-love (φιλαυτία) renders us malicious: for every man is too much devoted to himself, and neglects and disregards others. But this vice yields to the stronger feelings of a father's love, so that men

forget themselves, and give to their children with overflowing liberality. Whence comes this, but because God, of *whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,* (Ephesians 3:15,) drops into their hearts a portion of his goodness? But if the little drops produce such an amount of beneficence, what ought we to expect from the inexhaustible ocean? Would God, who thus opens the hearts of men, shut his own? Let us also remember that passage of Isaiah, "Though a mother forget her children," (Isaiah 49:15,) yet the Lord will be like himself,[466] and will always show himself to be a Father.

11. *Your Father will give good things* This is expressly mentioned by Christ, that believers may not give way to foolish and improper desires in prayer. We know how great influence, in this respect, is exerted by the excesses and presumption of our flesh. There is nothing which we do not allow ourselves to ask from God; and if he does not humor our folly, we exclaim against him. Christ therefore enjoins us to submit our desires to the will of God, that he may give us nothing more than he knows to be advantageous. We must not think that he takes no notice of us, when he does not answer our wishes: for he has a right to distinguish what we actually need. All our affections being blind, the rule of prayer must be sought from the word of God: for we are not competent judges of so weighty a matter. He who desires to approach God with the conviction that he will be heard, must learn to restrain his heart from asking any thing that is not agreeable to his will.

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."
(James 4:3)

Instead of *good things (ἀγαθὰ)* in the last clause, Luke says *the Holy Spirit* This does not exclude other benefits, but points out what we ought chiefly to ask: for we ought never to forget the exhortation, *Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all other things shall be added to you,* (Matthew 6:33.) It is the duty of the children of God, when they engage in prayer, to strip themselves of earthly affections, and to rise to meditation on the spiritual life. In this way, they will set little value on food and clothing, as compared to the earnest and pledge of their adoption, (Romans 8:15; Ephesians 1:14:) and when God has given so valuable a treasure, he will not refuse smaller favors.

Luke 11:5. *Which of you shall have a friend, Luke* adds this comparison, which is not mentioned by Matthew. The general instruction conveyed by it is this: Believers ought not to be discouraged, if they do not immediately obtain their desires, or if they find them difficult to be obtained: for if, among men, importunity of asking extorts what a person would not willingly do, we have no reason to doubt that God will listen to us, if we persevere constantly in prayer, and if our minds do not slacken through difficulty or delay.

466 "Le Seigneur ne changera point;" — "the Lord will not change."

MATTHEW 7:12-14; LUKE 6:31

Matthew 7:12-14	Luke 6:31
12. All things, therefore, whatsoever you would wish that man should do to you, do so also to them: for this is the Law and the Prophets. **13**. Enter in by the strait gate: because broad is the gate, and wide is the road, which leadeth to destruction, and there are many who enter by it. **14**. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the road, which leadeth to life, and there are few who find it.	**31**. And as you wish that men should do to you, do you also to them likewise.

Matthew 7:12. *All things whatsoever you would wish* The word *therefore* (οὖν) is superfluous, as we often find such particles occurring, and without any addition to the sense, in detached sentences.[467] I have already said, that Matthew does not give here a single discourse, but a summary of doctrine collected out of many sermons. We must, therefore, read this sentence by itself. It is an exhortation to his disciples to be just, and contains a short and simple definition of what justice means. We are here informed, that the only reason why so many quarrels exist in the world, and why men inflict so many mutual injuries on each other, is, that they knowingly and willingly trample justice under their feet, while every man rigidly demands that it shall be maintained towards himself.

Where our own advantage is concerned, there is not one of us, who cannot explain minutely and ingeniously what ought to be done. And since every man shows himself to be a skillful teacher of justice for his own advantage, how comes it, that the same knowledge does not readily occur to him, when the profit or loss of another is at stake, but because we wish to be wise for ourselves only, and no man cares about his neighbors? What is more, we maliciously and purposely shut our eyes upon the rule of justice, which shines in our hearts. Christ therefore shows, that every man may be a rule of acting properly and justly towards his neighbors, if he do to others what he requires to be done to him. He thus refutes

467 Greek proverbs, even when exhibited in a detached form, are frequently introduced by ἀλλὰ and γὰρ, and similar particles, instances of which must be familiar to the classical reader. ☒Αλλ ᾽ οὐ τὸ μέγα ευ ἐστι, τὸ δὲ εὖ μέγα. *"But* not what is great is excellent, but what is excellent is great." ☒☒Ινα γὰρ δέος, ἔνθα καὶ αἰδὼς" *For* where fear is, there also is shame." Πόνος γὰρ ὡς λέγουσιν, εὐκλει☒ης, πατὴρ. "For labor, as they say, is the father of glory. The fact chiefly to be noticed here is, that such particles came to be regarded as a part of the proverb, and were hardly ever separated from it: though their use must originally have been elliptical, like that of γὰρ, which opens many a reply in Greek dialogues. — *Ed.*

all the vain pretenses, which men contrive for hiding or disguising their injustice. Perfect justice would undoubtedly prevail among us, if we were as faithful in learning *active* charity, (if we may use the expression,) as we are skillful in teaching *passive* charity.[468]

For this is the law and the prophets Our Lord does not intend to say, that this is the only point of doctrine laid down in *the law and the prophets,* but that all the precepts which they contain about charity, and all the laws and exhortations found in them about maintaining justice, have a reference to this object. The meaning is, that the second table of the law is fulfilled, when every man conducts himself in the same manner towards others, as he wishes them to conduct themselves towards him. There is no need, he tells us, of long and involved debates, if this simplicity is preserved, and if men do not, by inordinate self-love, efface the rectitude which is engraven on their hearts.

13. *Enter in by the strait gate* As nothing is more opposed to the flesh than the doctrine of Christ, no man will ever make great proficiency in it who has not learned to confine his senses and feelings, so as to keep them within those boundaries, which our heavenly Teacher prescribes for curbing our wantonness. As men willingly flatter themselves, and live in gaiety and dissipation, Christ here reminds his disciples, that they must prepare to walk, as it were, along a *narrow* and thorny *road* But as it is difficult to restrain our desires from wicked licentiousness and disorder, he soothes this bitterness by a joyful remuneration, when he tells us, that *the narrow gate, and the narrow road, lead to life* Lest we should be captivated, on the other hand, by the allurements of a licentious and dissolute life, and wander as the lust of the flesh draws us,[469] he declares that they rush headlong to death, who choose to walk along *the broad road, and through the wide gate,* instead of keeping by *the strait gate, and narrow way, which lead to life*

He expressly says, that *many* run along the *broad road:* because men ruin each other by wicked examples.[470] For whence does it arise, that each of them knowingly and wilfully rushes headlong, but because, while they are ruined in the midst of a vast crowd, they do not believe that they are ruined? The small number of believers, on the other hand, renders many persons careless. It is with difficulty that we are brought to renounce the world, and to regulate ourselves and our life by the manners of a *few*. We think it strange that we should be forcibly separated from the vast majority, as if we were not a part of the human race. But

468 "Si nous estions aussi bons disciples a prattiquer la charite active (si ainsi faut dire) comme nous sommes subtils docteurs a prescher la charite passive." — "If we were as good scholars in practising *active* charity, (if I may so express it,) as we are dexterous instructors in preaching *passive* charity."

469 ("Comme facilement les appetits de la chair nous tirent en leurs filets;") —("as the appetites of the flesh easily draw us into their nets.")

470 "Pource que les hommes se poussent les uns les autres au chemin de damnation par mauvais exemple;" — "because men urge each other on in the road to damnation by bad example."

though the doctrine of Christ confines and hems us in, reduces our life to a *narrow road,* separates us from the crowd, and unites us to a *few* companions, yet this harshness ought not to prevent us from striving to obtain life.

It is sufficiently evident from Luke's Gospel, that the instruction, which we are now considering, was uttered by Christ at a different time from that on which he delivered the paradoxes,[471] which we have formerly examined, about a *happy* life, (Matthew 5:3-12,) and laid down to them the rule of prayer. And this is what I have repeatedly hinted, that the instructions which are related by the other Evangelists, at different times, according to the order of the history, were here collected by Matthew into one summary, that he might bring more fully under our view the manner in which Christ taught his disciples. I have therefore thought it best to introduce here the whole passage from Luke, which corresponds to this sentence. While I have been careful to inform my readers, as to the order of time which is observed by Luke, they will forgive me, I hope, for not being more exact[472] than Matthew in the arrangement of the doctrine.

471 "Quand il a prononce ces sentences que nous avons veues par ci de-vant, monstrant tout au contraire de l'opinion commune;" — "when he pronounced those sentences which we have formerly seen, showing it to be altogether contrary to the common opinion."

472 "Si je n'ay pas este plus scrupuleux ou curieux en conferant les passages tendans a un mesme poinct de doctrine;" — "if I have not been more careful or exact in comparing the passages relating to the same point of doctrine."

LUKE 13:23-24

Luke 13:23-24
23. And one saith to him, Lord, are there few who obtain salvation? And he said to them, **24**. Strive to enter by the narrow gate: for many, I say to you, will seek to enter, and shall not be able.

Luke 13:23. *And one saith to him* Although Matthew relates this answer, as if it were immediately connected with other sentences taken out of our Lord's sermons, yet I rather think that the occasion of its being spoken arose out of the present question. The reason why the question was put appears to have been, that Christ, who declared himself to be the author of life, could with difficulty collect a small number of disciples. It might appear, that a small band of men was to be saved, and that the whole church was going to ruin: for the whole of that nation, among whom the doctrine of Christ made no great progress, and by whom it was universally rejected, had been adopted by God as the heir of life. A similar doubt steals upon us, when we look at the melancholy condition of the world. ""The greater part of men pursue a life which is utterly at variance with the Gospel. What is the meaning of this?" For this reason Christ, directing his discourse to all, exhorted them to *strive to enter by the narrow gate* These words were intended to withdraw his people from a foolish curiosity, by which many are retarded and involved, when they look around to see if any companions are joining them, as if they were unwilling to be saved but in a crowd. When he bids them *strive,* or labor, he conveys the information, that it is impossible to obtain eternal life without great and appalling difficulties. Let believers, therefore, give their earnest attention to this object, instead of indulging in excessive curiosity about the vast number of those who are going astray.

24. *For many will seek to enter* This was added, that we might not be deceived by a vain hope, as if the multitude of our companions would be of any avail to us. The flesh is willing to flatter itself, and many who now give themselves every indulgence, promise to themselves an easy entrance into life. Thus men practice mutual deception on each other, and fall asleep in wicked indifference. To shake off from his own people those flattering hopes, Christ declares that those who calculate that their possession of life is already certain, will be shut out.[473]

473 Our author appears to have become apprehensive that this language was ambiguous, and, lest it might be interpreted differently from what he intended, he has taken care to insert in the French Version an explanatory clause: "que ceux qui se font accroire qu'ils sont desia tout asseurez de la vie eternelle, *et cheminent a leur plaisir sans souci,* en seront rejettez;" —"that those who make themselves believe that they are already perfectly assured of eternal life, *and walk on at their pleasure without concern,* will be excluded from it." — *Ed.*

LUKE 13:25-30

Luke 13:25-30
25. And when the master of the house shall have arisen, and shall have shut the door, and you shall begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us: and he answering shall say to you, I know not whence you are: **26**. Then you shall begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. **27**. And he shall say, I say to you, I know not whence you are: depart from me, all who work iniquity. **28**. Weeping and gnashing of teeth shall be there, when you shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves shut out. **29**. And they shall come from the east and west, and north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. **30**. And, lo, they are last who shall be first, and they are first who shall be last.

Luke 13:25. *And when the master of the house shall have arisen* Though these words, as I hinted a little before, were spoken on a different and later occasion, I have chosen to pay more regard to the doctrine than to the time: for it is no slight assistance to the understanding to read, in immediate connection, those passages which are closely related in meaning. As Christ had declared that to many, who shall desire to enter into heaven, the door will not be open, he now asserts, that they gain nothing by occupying a place in the church because God will at length arise in judgment, and shut out from his kingdom those who now lay claim to a place in his family. He employs the comparison of the *master of a house,* who, having learned that some wicked and dissolute persons among his own domestics steal out unperceived during the night, and expose the house to thieves, *rises and shuts the door,* and does not allow those night-prowlers to enter, who have been wandering through the public streets at unseasonable hours. By these words he warns us, that we must avail ourselves of the opportunity, while it is offered: for so long as the Lord invites us to himself, the *door* is, as it were, open, that we may enter into the kingdom of heaven: but the greater part do not deign to move a step. Christ therefore threatens, that *the door* will at length be *shut,* and that those who are looking for companions are in danger of being refused admission.

26. *Thou hast taught in our streets* Christ expressly states, that it will be of no advantage to the Jews, that he approached near to them, and permitted them to enjoy familiar intercourse with him, if, when called, they do not answer at the appointed day. But he does not follow out his comparison: for, after having spoken about *the master of a house,* he now states, without a figure, that he is himself the judge; and indeed the words, *thou hast taught in our streets,* can apply to no one but himself. We now perceive his design, which was, to warn the Jews not to allow themselves to lose, by their own neglect, the salvation which it is in their power to obtain.

28. *When you shall see Abraham* The Jews bore no resemblance to the holy fathers, and had no right to boast of being descended from them: yet nothing was more customary than to abuse the title of the Church.[474] Christ here assures them, that a bastard race, which has departed from the faith and piety of the fathers, has "no inheritance in *the kingdom of God,*" (Ephesians 5:5.) There is a silent but implied reproof, that those who were desirous to have companions in seeking salvation, did not endeavor to associate themselves with *Abraham, and the prophets,* and the holy fathers, instead of looking around among their contemporaries, who had degenerated greatly from their example into innumerable corruptions. "If you neglect (says he) to *enter by the strait gate,* because you are kept back by the great number of those who are going astray, do you not see that you are separated from the number of believers, and become involved with unbelievers?" If the aspect of the world now dazzles your eyes, the last day will cure you of this folly, but it will be too late: for you shall then know that you, and others like you, are excluded from *the kingdom of God,* and have no part with *Abraham*

29. *And they shall come from the east* He now draws a larger illustration from the fact, that the Jews, who reckoned themselves the only lawful heirs of God, were to be rejected, and that the Gentiles were to be substituted in their room, and obtain the life which was promised to Abraham and his posterity. He contrasts the Gentiles with them, in order to excite them to faith by a holy jealousy: as Paul writes, that

"it will be a distinguished honor of his ministry, if he excite any of his nation and blood to such an emulations,"

(Romans 11:13,14.)

The Jews must have been stung by it: for they had an inordinate love of themselves, and proudly despised God and his gifts. But as we shall, ere long, meet with this sentence again in the Gospel by Matthew I now glance at it more slightly.

30. *And, lo, they are last who shall be first* The same words, as we shall elsewhere see, were frequently employed by Christ, but in a different sense, (Matthew 19:30; 20:16; Mark 10:31.) All that he intended here was, to throw down the vain confidence of the Jews, who, having been chosen by God in preference to all the rest of the world, trusted to this distinction, and imagined that God was in a manner bound to them. For this reason, Christ threatens that their condition will soon be changed; that the Gentiles, who were at that time cast off, would obtain the first rank; and that the Jews, deprived of their honor, would not even occupy the farthest corner in the Church.[475]

474 "Et avoyent tousjours en la bouche le titre d'Eglise, duquel ils abu- soyent;" — "and had always in their mouth the title of Church, which they abused."

475 "Ne tiendront pas mesme le dernier reng, ou quelque petit coin en l'Eglise;" — "will not hold even the lowest rank, or some small corner in the Church."

MATTHEW 7:15-20; LUKE 6:43-45

Matthew 7:15-20	Luke 6:43-45
15. But beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. **16**. From their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? **17**. So every good tree yields good fruits, and a rotten tree yields bad fruits. **18**. A good tree cannot yield evil fruits, nor can a rotten tree yield good fruits. **19**. Every tree, which does not yield good fruit, is cut down, and is thrown into the fire. **20**. Therefore from their fruits you shall know them.	**43**. For the tree is not good which yields rotten fruit; and the tree is not rotten which yields good fruit. **44**. For every tree is known from its fruit: for men do not gather figs from thorns, nor from thorns do they gather grapes. **45**. A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth what is good, and a bad man, out of the bad treasure of his heart, bringeth forth what is bad. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

Matthew 7:15. *But beware of false prophets* These words were intended to teach, that the Church would be exposed to various impositions, and that consequently many would be in danger of falling from the faith, if they were not carefully on their guard. We know what a strong propensity men have to falsehood, so that they not only have a natural desire to be deceived, but each individual appears to be ingenious in deceiving himself. Satan, who is a wonderful contriver of delusions, is constantly laying snares to entrap ignorant and heedless persons. It was a general expectation among the *Jews* that, under the reign of Christ, their condition would be delightful, and free from all contest or uneasiness. He therefore warns his disciples that, if they desire to persevere, they must prepare themselves to avoid the snares of Satan. It is the will of the Lord, (as has been already said,) that his Church shall be engaged in uninterrupted war in this world. That we may continue to be his disciples to the end, it is not enough that we are merely submissive, and allow ourselves to be governed by his Word. Our faith, which is constantly attacked by Satan, must be prepared to resist.

It is of the greatest consequence, undoubtedly, that we should suffer ourselves to be directed by good and faithful ministers of Christ: but as false teachers, on the other hand, make their appearance, if we do not carefully watch, and if we are not fortified by perseverance, we shall be easily carried off from the flock. To this purpose also is that saying of Christ:

> "The sheep hear the voice of the shepherd; and a stranger
> they do not follow, but flee from him," (John 10:3, 5)

Hence too we infer, that there is no reason why believers should be discouraged or alarmed, when wolves creep into the fold of Christ, when *false prophets* endeavor to corrupt

the purity of the faith by false doctrines. They ought rather to be aroused to keep watch: for it is not without reason that Christ enjoins them to be on their guard. Provided that we are not led astray through our own sluggishness, we shall be able to avoid every kind of snares; and, indeed, without this confidence, we would not have the courage necessary for being on our guard. Now that we know that the Lord will not fail to perform his promises, whatever may be the attacks of Satan, let us go boldly to the Lord, asking from him the Spirit of wisdom, by whose influences he not only seals on our hearts the belief of his truth, but exposes the tricks and impositions of Satan, that we may not be deceived by them. When Christ says, that they *come to us in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves,* his meaning is, that they do not want a very plausible pretense, if prudence be not exercised in subjecting them to a thorough examination.

16. *From their fruits you shall know them* Had not this mark of distinction been added, we might have called in question the authority of all teachers without exception. If there is a mortal danger to be dreaded in teachers, and if we see no way of avoiding it, we shall be under the necessity of holding them all suspected: and there will be no better or shorter method than to keep our ears shut against them all. We see that ungodly men, to screen themselves when rejecting every kind of doctrine, hold out this danger, and that weak and ill-informed persons remain in a state of perplexity. That our reverence for the Gospel, and for its faithful ministers and teachers, may not be diminished, Christ enjoins us to form our opinion of the *false prophets from their fruits* It is with a very bad grace that the Papists, in order to excite hatred against us, quote directly this exhortation of Christ, *Beware of false prophets,* and by their clamors induce ignorant people to avoid us, without knowing why. But whoever desires to follow our Lord's advice must judge wisely and with just discretion. For ourselves, we not only acknowledge freely that men ought to *beware of false prophets,* but we carefully and earnestly exhort simple people to *beware* of them. Only we warn them that, agreeably to the rule which Christ has laid down, they should first make a strict examination, that simple people may not reject the pure Word of God, and suffer the punishment of their own rashness. There is a wide difference between wise caution and perverse squeamishness.[476] It is a heinous wickedness in the Papists to repeal the command of Christ, by infusing into unhappy persons an unfounded dread,[477] which deters them from making inquiry. Let this be regarded by us as a first principl that those who tremblingly reject or avoid a doctrine unknown to them, act improperly, and are very far from obeying the command of Christ.

476 "Il y a grande difference entre une bonne facon de se donner garde d'estre trompe, et un deboutement temeraire sans savoir pourquoy." — "There is a great difference between a proper method of guarding against being deceived, and a hasty rejection without knowing, why."

477 "Par une vaine crainte, qu'ils leur proposent;" — "by a vain dread which they hold out to them."

It now remains to be seen, what are the *fruits* which Christ points out. Those who confine them to the life are, in my opinion, mistaken. As pretended sanctity, and I know not what masks belonging to greater austerity of life, are frequently held out by some of the worst impostors, this would be a very uncertain test. Their hypocrisy, I do own, is at length discovered; for nothing is more difficult than to counterfeit virtue. But Christ did not intend to submit his doctrine to a decision so unjust in itself, and so liable to be misunderstood, as to have it estimated by the life of men. Under the *fruits* the *manner of teaching* is itself included, and indeed holds the chief place: for Christ proves that he was sent by God from this consideration, that

"he seeketh not his own glory,
but the glory of the Father who sent him," (John 7:18.)

Is it objected, that few persons are endued with such acuteness, as to distinguish *good fruits* from *bad?* I answer, as I have already said: Believers are never deprived of the Spirit of wisdom, where his assistance is needful, provided they distrust themselves, renounce their own judgment, and give themselves up wholly to his direction. Let us remember, however, that all doctrines must be brought to the Word of God as the standard, and that, in judging *of false prophets,* the rule of faith holds the chief place. We must also consider what God enjoins on his prophets and the ministers of his word: for in this way their faithfulness may be easily ascertained. If, for example, we place before our minds what Paul requires in *bishops,* (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9,) that description will be sufficient of itself to condemn the whole mass of Popery: for the Popish priests seem as if they purposely intended to present an opposite picture. There is no reason to wonder, therefore, if they forbid men to form a judgment of false prophets. But this passage clearly shows, that their titles ought to go for nothing, and that not much regard ought to be had even to their calling, if those who receive the name of pastors, and are called to the office of teachers, do not faithfully answer to their charge.

Do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? By these proverbs, which were then in common use and universally received, Christ confirms his statement, that no man can be deceived by *false prophets,* unless he is wilfully blind: for the *fruits* as plainly discover upright servants of God, and unfaithful workmen, as the *fruits* point out the nature of the tree.

Luke 6:43. *For the tree is not good* This statement, as related by Luke, appears to be a general instruction given by Christ, that by the *fruits* our opinion of every man ought to be formed, in the same manner as *a tree is known by its fruit* After having inserted the reproof to hypocrites, who "*perceive a straw in the eye of another, but do not see a beam in their own*," (verses 41,42,) he immediately adds, *For the tree is not good which beareth rotten fruit, nor is the tree rotten which beareth good fruit* The illative particle γὰρ, *for,* appears to connect these two sentences. But as it is certain that Luke, in that sixth chapter, records various dis-

courses of Christ, it is also possible that he may have briefly glanced at what is more fully explained by Matthew. I attach no great importance to the word *for,* which in other passages is often superfiuous, and appears obviously to be so from the concluding statement.

Luke 6:45. *A good man, out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good* Such is the statement with which Luke concludes the discourse; and I have no doubt that he intended to describe, without a figure, the kind of judgment which Christ orders us to make from the *fruits* Believers ought to examine carefully what kind of doctrine is taught by those who profess to be the servants of God. "Titles (he says) are of little value, till the speaker give actual evidence that he is sent by God." Yet I am far from saying, that this passage may not be applied to a general doctrine, And certainly the last clause, *out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh,* has a more extensive reference than to false prophets: for it is a common proverb. Is it objected, that the tongues of men lie, and that men of the worst hearts are often the best speakers? I reply: Christ merely points out here what is a very ordinary occurrence. For, though hypocrites express in words what is different from the feelings of their hearts, that is no reason why we may not justly and appropriately call the tongue the *portrait* of the mind.

MATTHEW 7:21-23; LUKE 6:46

Matthew 7:21-23	Luke 6:46
21. Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, bu the who shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven. **22**. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name have done many wonderful works? **23**. And then will I confess to them, I never knew you depart from me, you who work iniquity.	**46**. And why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Matthew 7:21. *Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord.* Christ extends his discourse farther: for he speaks not only of *false prophets,* who rush upon the flock to tear and devour, but of hirelings, who insinuate themselves, under fair appearances, as pastors, though they have no feeling of piety.[478] This doctrine embraces all hypocrites, whatever may be their rank or station, but at present he refers particularly to pretended teachers,[479] who seem to excel others. He not only directs his discourse to them, to rouse them from the indifference, in which they lie asleep like drunk people, but also warns believers, not to estimate such masks beyond their proper value. In a word, he declares that, so soon as the doctrine of the Gospel shall have begun to bear fruit by obtaining many disciples, there will not only be very many of the common people who falsely and hypocritically submit to it, but even in the rank of pastors there will be the same treachery, so that they will deny by their actions and life what they profess with the mouth.[480] Whoever then desires to be reckoned among the disciples, must labor to devote himself, sincerely and honestly, to the exercises of a new life.

In the Gospel of Luke, it is a general reproof: *Why call you me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?* But as this corruption proceeds, for the most part, from pretended teachers, and easily finds its way from them into the whole body, so, according to Matthew, our Lord expressly attacks them. *To do the will of the Father* not only means, to regulate

478 "Combien qu'au dedans ils n'ayent point d'affection de crainte de Dieu;" — "though at bottom they have no feeling of the fear of God."

479 "Les docteurs feints et doubles;" — "reigned and deceitful teachers."

480 "Ce qu'ils enseignent et confessent de bouche;" — "what they teach and confess with the mouth."

their life and manners, (as philosophers talked[481]) by the rule of virtues, but also to believe in Christ, according to that saying,

"This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life,"

(John 6:40.)

These words, therefore, do not exclude faith, but presuppose it as the principle from which other good works flow.

22. *Many will say to me* Christ again summons hypocrites to his judgment-seat, as we showed a little ago from Luke. So long as they hold a place in his Church, they both flatter themselves and deceive others. He therefore declares, that a day is coming, when he will cleanse his barn, and separate the chaff and straw from the pure wheat. *To prophesy in the name of Christ* is, to discharge the office of teacher by his authority, and, as it were, under his direction. *Prophecy* is here, I think, taken in a large sense, as in the fourteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Corinthians. He might have simply used the word *preach,* but purposely employed the more honorable appellation, in order to show more clearly, that an outward profession is nothing, whatever may be its brilliancy in the eyes of men. *To do wonderful works in the name of Christ* is nothing else than to perform miracles by his power, authority, command, and direction: for, though the word ὁμολογήσω, *powers,* is sometimes confined to one class of miracles, yet in this and many other passages it denotes every kind of miracles.

23. *And then will I confess to them*[482] By using the word ὁμολογήσω, *I will confess,*[483] Christ appears to allude to the vain boasting, by which hypocrites now vaunt themselves. "They indeed have *confessed* me with the tongue, and imagine that they have fully discharged their duty. The *confession* of my name is now heard aloud from their tongue. But I too will *confess* on the opposite side, that their profession is deceitful and false." And what is contained in Christ's *confession?* That he never reckoned them among his own people, even at the time when they boasted that they were the pillars of the church.

Depart from me. He orders those persons to go out from his presence, who had stolen, under a false title, an unjust and temporary possession of his house. From this passage in our Lord's discourse Paul seems to have taken what he says to Timothy,

The Lord knoweth who are his: and, let every one who calleth on the name of Christ depart from iniquity, (2 Timothy 2:19.)

481 "Comme les philosophes ont voulu enselgner le monde;" — "as the philosophers wished to teach the world."

482 "Et lors je leur diray ouvertement;" — "and then will I openly say to them."

483 "Le mot Grec dont use l'Evangeliste signifie proprement, Je leur confesseray;" — "the Greek word, which the Evangelist uses, literally signifies 'I will confess to them.'"

The former clause is intended to prevent weak minds from being alarmed or discouraged by the desertion of those who had a great and distinguished reputation:[484] for he declares that they were disowned by the Lord, though by a vain show they captivated the eyes of men. He then exhorts all those who wish to be reckoned among the disciples of Christ, to *withdraw* early from *iniquity,* that Christ may not drive them from his presence, when he shall *"separate the sheep from the goats*," (Matthew 25:33.)

484 "D'aucuns qui auront en grand bruit, et auront este fort estimez;"— "of any who shall have made great noise, and shall have been greatly esteemed."

MATTHEW 7:24-29; LUKE 6:47-49

Matthew 7:24-29	Luke 6:47:49
24. Every one, therefore, who heareth those saying of mine, and doeth them, I will compare him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock. **25**. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and struck against that house, and it did not fall: for it had been founded on a rock. **26**. And every one who heareth those saying of mine, and doeth them not, shall be compared to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. **27**. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and struck against that house: and it fell, and the downfall of it was great. **28**. And it happened, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that the multitudes were astonished at his doctrine. **29**. For he taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes.	**47**. Whoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like. **48**. He is like a wise man who biult a house, and dug deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the deluge came, the stream dashed against that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded on a rock. **49**. And he who hears, and did not, is like a man who built his house on the earth without a foundation, on which the stream dashed, and immediately it fell, and great was the downfall of that house.

Matthew 7:24. *Every one, therefore, who heareth* As it is often difficult to distinguish the true professors of the Gospel from the false, Christ shows, by a beautiful comparison, where the main difference lies. He represents two houses, one of which was built without a foundation, while the other was well-founded. Both have the same external appearance: but, when the wind and storms blow, and the floods dash against them, the former will immediately fall, while the latter will be sustained by its strength against every assault. Christ therefore compares a vain and empty profession of the Gospel to a beautiful, but not solid, building, which, however elevated, is exposed every moment to downfall, because it wants a foundation. Accordingly, Paul enjoins us to be well and thoroughly founded on Christ, and to have deep roots, (Colossians 2:7,)

"that we may not be tossed and driven about by every wind of doctrine,"

(Ephesians 4:14)

that we may not give way at every attack. The general meaning of the passage is, that true piety is not fully distinguished from its counterfeit,[485] till it comes to the trial. For the temptations, by which we are tried, are like billows and storms, which easily overwhelm unsteady minds, whose lightness is not perceived during the season of prosperity.

Who heareth these sayings The relative *these* denotes not one class of sayings, but the whole amount of doctrine. He means, that the Gospel, if it be not deeply rooted in the mind, is like a wall, which has been raised to a great height, but does not rest on any foundation. "That faith (he says) is true, which has its roots deep in the heart, and rests on an earnest and steady affection as its foundation, that it may not give way to temptations." For such is the vanity of the human mind, that all build upon the sand, who do not dig so deep as to deny themselves.

28. *When Jesus had finished these sayings* By *these sayings* I understand not only the discourse which he delivered when he came down from the mountain, but the rest of the doctrine, which had already been made known to the people. The meaning therefore is, that, where he had given the people, on all sides, a taste of his doctrine, all were seized with astonishment, because a strange, indescribable, and unwonted majesty drew to him the minds of men. What is meant by his *teaching them as having authority, and not as the scribes,* I have already explained.[486]

485 "Qu'on ne peut pas bien discerner la vraye crainte de Dieu, d'avecques une feintise et vaine apparence d' icelle;" — "that the true fear of God cannot be well distinguished from a dissembling and vain appearance of it."

486 A parallel passage in the Gospel of Mark (1:22) having already occurred, the reader will find Calvin's exposition of these remarkable words at page 247 of this volume. — *Ed.*

MATTHEW 8:1-4; MARK 1:40-45; LUKE 5:12-16

Matthew 8:1-4	Mark 1:40-45	Luke 5:12-16
1. And when he had come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. **2**. And, lo, a leper, approaching, worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou art willing, thou art able to cleanse me. **3**. And Jesus, having stretched out his hand, touched him, saying, I am willing; be thou clean: and immediately his leprosy was cleansed. **4**. And Jesus saith to him, See that thou do not tell it to any man: but go, show thyself to the priest, and present the offering which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.	**40**. And a leper came to him, beseeaching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying to him, If thou art willing, thou art able to cleanse me. **41**. And Jesus, having compassion, stretched out his hand, and touched him, and said to him, I am willing; be thou clean. **42**. And when he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. **43**. And threatening him, [487] he immediately sent him away; **44**. And he said to him, See that thou say nothing to any man: but go, show thyself to the priest, and present for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony to them. **45**. But he, having gone out, began to publish many things, and to blaze abroad the matter, so that Jesus could no longer enter openly into cities, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.	**12**. And it happened, while he was in a certain city, lo, a man full of leprosy: and when he had seen Jesus, he fell down on his face, and besought Jesus, saying, Lord, if thou art willing, thou art able to cleanse me. **13**. And having stretched out his hand, he touched him, saying, I am willing; be thou clean: and immediately the leprosy departed from him. **14**. And he commanded him that he should not tell it to any man, but saith, Go, show thyself to the priest, and present for thy cleansing as Moses commanded, for a testimony to them. **15**. But still more did the report spread about him, and great multitudes assembled, to hear him, and to be healed by him of their infirmities. **16**. And he sought retirement in the deserts, and prayed.

Matthew 8:1. *And when he had come down from the mountain* Matthew now returns to the course of the history. He had formerly said, that Christ *went up into a mountain,* (verse 1) then he threw, as it were, into one heap, many leading points of the doctrine of

487 "Et l'ayant menace;" — "and having threatened him."

Christ; and now he adds that, about the time when he preached on the mountain, he healed a certain *leper* The same event is related by *Mark* and *Luke,* though they do not mention the time. It was a striking display of the divine power of Christ, that, by his word alone and a touch of his hand, he suddenly cleansed the man's leprosy. Now, though *leprosy* was a different kind of disease from *elephantiasis,*[488] (ἐλεφαντίασις,) it is plain enough that it was difficult to cure. When it had continued long and become deeply seated, it rarely happened that any person recovered. Granting that physicians might, by their professional skill, have given some relief, it is manifest that there was nothing human about this miracle.

2. *Approaching, worshipped* What is the meaning of the verb προσκυνεῖν, which is rendered in the Latin version, *adorare,* to *adore* or *worship,* may be easily learned from this passage. For the exposition of it we may rely on the other two Evangelists, of whom *Mark* says, that he *fell on his knees,* and *Luke,* that *he fell down on his face* The outward gesture of *kneeling* was exhibited by the leper as a token of reverence. Now we know, that such marks of respect were in general use among the Jews, as the people of the East are more addicted to that kind of ceremonies. Many people accordingly think, that the leper did not intend to render to Christ divine worship,[489] but gave him a respectful salutation as a distinguished prophet of God.

I enter into no dispute as to the feelings which moved the leper to pay reverence to Christ. But I look at what he attributed to him, that he *was able to cleanse him, if he were willing* By these words he declared, that he acknowledged a divine power in Christ: and when Christ replies, *I am willing,* he shows that he claimed more for himself than belongs to man. He who, by the mere expression of his will, restores health to men, must possess supreme authority. Whether the leper believed that Christ was the Son of God, or that he had received this power in the same manner as Moses and the other prophets, he entertains

488 "The burning ulceration, with which the great adversary of man afflicted the venerable patriarch Job, (2:7,) is generally understood to be the *elephantiasis,* or leprosy of the Arabians; and derives its name from its rendering the skin of the patient, like that of an *elephant,* scabrous and dark-colored, and furrowed all over with tubercles, loathsome alike to the individual and to spectators."—*(Horne's Introduction,* vol. iii. p. 328.) This quotation is made, because it seemed proper that a word of comparatively rare occurrence, which Calvin uses, should be defined, and its origin explained; and because that useful work, from which we have quoted, was at hand. Many of the most important topics embraced by the "Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures" have since been handled by writers of greater learning and research. Yet it would be ungrateful not to acknowledge that, at the time of its appearance, it supplied an important *desideratum,* that it probably led the way to other treatises, and that, as a popular and miscellaneous book of reference on Biblical literature, it is not yet superseded. — *Ed.*

489 "De faire a Christ un honneur appartenant a Ia majeste divine;" — "to do to Christ an honor belonging to the divine majesty."

no doubt that he held in his hand, and in his power, the gift of healing. True, he speaks conditionally, *if thou art willing, thou art able* But this is not inconsistent with that certainty of faith, which God demands in our prayers: for men ought not to expect more than God promises. The leper had not learned by any inspired communication, or any promise of God, what Christ would do. It would have been improper in him, therefore, to go beyond these limits for though we sometimes read that certain persons prayed without any condition, we ought to believe that they were guided by special movements of the Spirit,[490] which must not be taken for a general rule. I am not even certain if we are at liberty to say, strictly speaking, that the leper offered a prayer. He only declares, that he is so fully convinced of the power of Christ, as to entertain no doubt that it is in his power to cure leprosy; and then presents himself to be healed, but uncertain as to the result, because he did not yet know the *will* of Christ.[491]

3. *Having stretched out his hand, he touched* Under the Law, the *touch* of a *leper* was infectious; but as Christ possesses such purity as to repel all filth and defilement, he does not, by touching, either pollute himself with leprosy, or become a transgressor of the law. When he took upon him our flesh, he did not only deign to touch as with his hand, but was united to one and the same body with ourselves, that we might be *flesh of his flesh,* (Genesis 2:23.) Nor did he only stretch out his arm to us, but descended from heaven even to hell, and yet contracted no stain from it, but, retaining his innocence, took away all our impurities, and sprinkled us with his holiness. By his word alone he might have healed the *leper;* but he applied, at the same time, the touch of his hand, to express the feeling of compassion. Nor ought this to excite our wonder, since he chose to take upon him our flesh, that he might cleanse us from our sins. *The stretching out of his hand* was therefore an expression and token of infinite grace and goodness. What we indolently read, and coldly pass by, cannot be duly weighed without great astonishment. The Son of God was so far from disdaining to talk to a leper, that he even *stretched out his hand to touch* that uncleanness.

4. *And Jesus saith to him, See that thou tell it not to any one* Some persons, by way of excusing the *leper,* think that Christ did not seriously forbid him to publish the miracle, but rather gave him an additional excitement to do so. Others more justly consider the reason of the prohibition to have been, that the full "time was not yet come," (John 7:6.) I do acknowledge, that to have suppressed this miracle would have been improper: but our Lord had a particular reason for wishing that the report of it should not be immediately spread, or, at least, not by the *leper* The *leper* was so far from deserving praise for the disorderly exhibition of his regard, that he ought, in my opinion, to be condemned for not obeying

490 "Qu'il y a eu en tels personnages des mouvemens singuliers, et inspirations particulieres du S. Esprit;" — "that there were in such persons singular movements, and peculiar inspirations of the Holy Spirit."

491 "Le vouloir de Christ sur sa requeste;" — "the will of Christ as to his request."

Christ's injunction. If he wished to express his gratitude to him to whom he was indebted for his cure, no better method could have been found than *obedience,* which God prefers to all *sacrifices,* (1 Samuel 15:22,) and which is the origin and foundation of lawful worship. This example shows us, that those who allow themselves to be guided by inconsiderate zeal act improperly, because the more eager they are to please God, the greater progress do they make in rebellion to his commands.

Show thyself to the priest As the ceremonies of the law had not yet been repealed, Christ did not wish that they should be despised or neglected. Now, God had commanded in the law that, if any man had been cleansed from leprosy, he should present himself to the priest with a sacrifice of thanksgiving, (Leviticus 14:2.) The design[492] was, that the priest, by his decision, might attest the benefit received from God; and that the person who had been healed might give an expression of his gratitude. Christ, therefore, by sending the leper *to the priest,* proves that he had no other object in view than to display the glory of God. The *showing to the priest* was for the purpose of examination, and the *offering* was the expression of thanksgiving. He wishes that the priests should examine the man, to make the divine favor manifest and undoubted; and that the *leper,* on the other hand, should acknowledge that God had healed him. Meanwhile, as I have just mentioned, he commands them to observe the ceremonies prescribed by the law, till the time when it should be repealed.

The attempt of the Papists to produce this passage, as an authority for their own *confession,*[493] is highly foolish. *Leprosy,* they allege, is put allegorically for *sin;* and *the priests,* who are consecrated by the Pope, are the judges of spiritual leprosy.[494] Even granting that this authority was conferred on the priests under the law, for the purpose of informing the people, that all their cleanness, and the decision respecting it, depended on the priesthood, still this is impiously claimed for themselves by the Popish priests. All the honor that belonged to the ancient priests is now claimed by Christ alone as his own. He alone is appointed to be the judge of spiritual leprosy, and entitled to receive, from those who have been cured, the offering for their cleansing. Under the law, a sacrifice was employed as the seal of cleanness, because satisfaction made by the shedding of blood is the only way in which men are cleansed. To transfer to another that right, which God has declared to be the prerogative of his own Son, is a detestable sacrilege. When the ministers of the Gospel, by the command of Christ, declare to sinners that they are cleansed from their sins, this must not be tortured

492 "Le but de ce commandement;" — "the end of that commandment."

493 Those who wish to make themselves acquainted with Calvin's views on the whole subject of what the Papists call *auricular confession,* will find them stated in the *Institutions of the Christian Religion* (B. III. c. iv. sec. 19.) — *Ed*

494 "Doivent avoir le jugement et la cognoissance de la ladrerie spirituelle;" — "ought to have the judgment and discernment of spiritual leprosy."

into the pretended jurisdiction, which the priests imagine, of pronouncing a decision about leprosy.[495]

Matthew 8:4; Mark 1:44. *For a testimony to them* Some consider *testimony* to mean here a law or statute, as it is said in the Book of Psalms, God laid down this "for a testimony to Israel," (Psalm 122:4.) But this appears to me to be a poor exposition: for I have no doubt that the pronoun *to them* refers to the priests.[496] Christ said this, in my opinion, with a view to the present occurrence: for this miracle was afterwards to be a sufficiently clear proof for convicting them of ingratitude. There is nothing inconsistent with this in the command which Christ gave to the leper to maintain silence: for he did not intend that the remembrance of the miracle which he had wrought should remain always buried. When the leper, at the command of Christ, came into the presence of the priest, this was *a testimony to them,* which would render them inexcusable, if they refused to receive Christ as the minister of God; and would, at the same time, take away occasion for slander, since Christ did not neglect a single point of the law. In a word, if they were not past cure, they might be led to Christ; while, on the other hand, so solemn a testimony of God was sufficiently powerful to condemn them, if they were unbelievers.

Mark 1:45. *So that Jesus could no longer enter openly into cities* Hence we learn the reason why Christ did not wish the miracle to be so soon made known. It was that he might have more abundant opportunity and freedom for teaching. Not that his enemies rose against him, and attempted to shut his mouth, but because the common people were so eager to demand miracles, that no room was left for doctrine. He wished that they would all be more attentive to the word than to signs. Luke accordingly says, that *he sought retirement in the deserts* He avoided a crowd of men, because he saw, that he would not satisfy the wishes of the people, without overwhelming his doctrine by a superfluity of miracles.[497]

495 "De discerner entre ladrerie et ladrerie;" — "of distinguishing between leprosy and leprosy."

496 According to the view which Calvin rejects, the words, *which Moses commanded for a testimony to them,* mean, "which Moses delivered *to them,* that is, to the people of Israel, as a divine ordinance." The view which he adopts may be more clearly brought out by a different arrangement of the words. *Present, for a testimony* to them, that is, "to the priests," *the offering which Moses commanded. — Ed*

497 "Que quant et quant il ne fist tant de miracles, que cela les empescheroit de bien penser a la doctrine;" — "without doing so many miracles as to prevent them from thinking properly about his doctrine."

MATTHEW 8:5-13; LUKE 7:1-10

Matthew 8:5-13	Luke 7:1-10
5. And when Jesus had entered into Capernaum, a centurion came to him, beseeching him, **6**. And saying, Lord, my servant is lying at home afflicted with palsy, and is grievously tormented. **7**. And Jesus saith to him, When I shall come, I will heal him. **8**. And the centurion answering him said, Lord, I do not deserve that thou shouldst come under my roof: but only say the word, and my servant will be healed. **9**. For I am a man subject to the power of another, and I have soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. **10**. And when Jesus had heard these things, he wondered, and said to those who followed, Verily I say to you, not even in Israel have I found so great faith. **11**. And I say to you, That many will come from the east and west, and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven: **12**. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast into the darkness that is without: weeping and gnashing of teeth will be there. **13**. And Jesus said to the centurion, Go, and as thou believest, so may it be done to thee: and his servant was healed in that hour. [498]	**1**. Now, when he had finished all his words in the hearing of the people, he entered into Capernaum. **2**. And a servant of a certain centurion, who was very dear to him, was ill and near death. **3**. And when he had heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, to entreat him, that he would come and heal his servant. **4**. And when they had come to him, they entreated him earnestly, saying, He deserves that though shouldest do this for him: **5**. For he loveth our nation, and himself hath built a synagogue. **6**. And Jesus went with them. And when he was already not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, and they said to him, Lord, do not trouble thyself: for I do not deserve that thou shouldest enter under my roof. **7**. And for this reason I did not reckon myself worthy to come to thee: but say in a word, and my servant will be healed. **8**. For I am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. **9**. And having heard these things, Jesus wondered at him, and he turned and said to the crowd that followed him, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found so great faith. **10**. And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant, who had been sick, in good health.

Matthew 8:5. *And when Jesus had entered* Those who think that Matthew and Luke give different narratives, are led into a mistake by a mere trifle. The only difference in the

498 "Et en ce mesme instant son garcon fut gairi;" — "and at that very instant his servant was healed."

words is, that Matthew says that *the centurion came to him,* while Luke says that he sent some of the Jews to plead in his name. But there is no impropriety in Matthew saying, that the centurion did what was done in his name and at his request. There is such a perfect agreement between the two Evangelists in all the circumstances, that it is absurd to make two miracles instead of one.

The band of soldiers, which the centurion had under his command, was stationed, I have no doubt, in the town of Capernaum, in the same manner as garrisons were usually appointed for the protection of the towns. Though he perceived the morals of the people to be very vicious and depraved, (for we know that Capernaum, being on the seacoast, must have been more dissolute[499] than other towns,) yet this did not prevent him from condemning the superstitions of his country, and acquiring a taste for true and sincere piety. He had not built a synagogue for the Jews without exposing himself to some hatred and to some risk: and the only reason why *he loved that nation* was, that he had embraced the worship of one God. Before Christ healed his servant, he had been healed by the Lord.

This was itself a miracle. One who belonged to the military profession, and who had crossed the sea with a band of soldiers, for the purpose of accustoming the Jews to endure the yoke of Roman tyranny, submits willingly, and yields obedience to the God of Israel. Luke says that this *servant was very dear to him;* and thus anticipates a doubt which might have arisen in the mind of the reader: for we know that slaves[500] were not held in such estimation, as to make their masters so solicitous about their life, unless by extraordinary industry, or fidelity, or some other virtue, they had secured their favor. By this statement Luke means, that this was not a low or ordinary slave, but a faithful servant, distinguished by many excellencies, and very highly esteemed by his master; and that this was the reason why he was so anxious about his life, and recommended him so earnestly. From both Evangelists it is evident that it was a sudden palsy, which, from the first attack, took away all hope of life: for slow palsies are not attended by severe pain. Matthew says, that he was *grievously tormented,* and Luke, that he was *near death* Both descriptions — pain or agony, and extreme danger — serve to enhance the glory of the miracle: and for this reason I am the more unwilling to hazard any absolute assertion as to the nature of the disease.

Luke 7:5. *For he loveth our nation* This was, no doubt, a commendation given him by the Jews on account of his piety:[501] for his *love of a nation* universally hated could proceed only from zeal for the Law, and from reverence for God. By *building a synagogue,* he showed

499 "Plus pleines de dissolutions et de desbauches;" — "more full of dissoluteness and debauchery."

500 "Qu'on ne tenoit pas si grande conte de serfs;" — "that they did not set so great value on slaves."

501 "Il n' y a point de doute que les Juifs recommandent cest homme pour l'affection et le bon zele qu'il avoit a la crainte de Dieu." — "There is no doubt that the Jews recommend this man for the affection and the good zeal which he had for the fear of God."

plainly that he favored the doctrine of the Law. The Jews had therefore good grounds for saying that, as a devout worshipper of God, he had claims on Christ for receiving such a favor. They discover, at the same time, a marvellous stupidity in admitting, by their own acknowledgment, that a Gentile possesses that grace of God which they despise and reject. If they consider Christ to be the minister and dispenser of the gifts of God, why do they not receive the grace offered to them before bringing foreigners to enjoy it? But hypocrites never fail to manifest such carelessness and presumption, as not to hesitate to look upon God as under some sort of obligations to them, and to dispose of his grace at their pleasure, as if it were in their own power; and then, when they are satisfied with it, or rather because they do not deign to taste it, they treat it as useless, and leave it to others.

Matthew 8:8. *Lord, I do not deserve that thou shouldest come under my roof* Matthew's narrative is more concise, and represents the man as saying this; while Luke explains more fully, that this was a message sent by his friends: but the meaning of both is the same. There are two leading points in this discourse. The centurion, sparing Christ by way of honoring him, requests that Christ will *not trouble himself,* because he reckons himself unworthy to receive a visit from him. The next point is, that he ascribes to Christ such power as to believe, that by the mere expression of his will, and by a word, his servant may recover and live. There was astonishing humility in exalting so highly above himself a man who belonged to a conquered and enslaved nation. It is possible, too, that he had become accustomed to the haughty pretensions of the Jews, and, being a modest man, did not take it ill to be reckoned a heathen, and therefore feared that he would dishonor a Prophet of God, if he pressed him to enter the house of a polluted Gentile. However that may be, it is certain that he speaks sincerely, and entertains such reverence for Christ, that he does not venture to invite him to his house, nay, as is afterwards stated by Luke, he reckoned himself unworthy to converse with him.[502]

But it may be asked, what moved him to speak of Christ in such lofty terms? The difficulty is even increased by what immediately follows, *only say the word, and my servant will be healed,* or, as Luke has it, *say in a word:* for if he had not acknowledged Christ to be the Son of God, to transfer the glory of God to a man would have been superstition. It is difficult to believe, on the other hand, that he was properly informed about Christ's divinity, of which almost all were at that time ignorant. Yet Christ finds no fault with his words,[503] but declares that they proceeded from faith: and this reason has forced many expositors to conclude, that the centurion bestows on Christ the title of the true and only God. I rather think that

502 "Il ne s'est pas estime digne d'aller parler a Christ;" — "he did not think himself worthy to go and talk to Christ."

503 "Toutefois Christ ne prend pas ces paroles comme dites de l'aventure et sans intelligence." — "Yet Christ does not take these words as spoken at random and without understanding."

the good man, having been informed about the uncommon and truly divine works of Christ, simply acknowledged in him the power of God. Something, too, he had undoubtedly heard about the promised Redeemer. Though he does not distinctly understand that Christ is *God manifested in the flesh,* (1 Timothy 3:16,) yet he is convinced that the power of God is manifested in him, and that he has received a commission to display the presence of God by miracles. He is not therefore chargeable with superstition, as if he had ascribed to a man what is the prerogative of God: but, looking at the commission which God had given to Christ, he believes that by a word alone he can heal his servant.

Is it objected, that nothing belongs more peculiarly to God than to accomplish by a word whatever he pleases, and that this supreme authority cannot without sacrilege be yielded to a mortal man? The reply is again easy. Though the centurion did not enter into those nice distinctions, he ascribed this power to the word, not of a mortal man, but of God, whose minister he fully believed Christ to be: on that point he entertained no doubt. The grace of healing having been committed to Christ,[504] he acknowledges that this is a heavenly power, and does not look upon it as inseparable from the bodily presence, but is satisfied with the word, from which he believes such a power to proceed.

Matthew 8:9. *For I am a man subject to the power of another* This comparison does not imply equality between the two cases, but is taken from the less to the greater. He forms a higher conception of the divine power, which is manifested in Christ, than of the authority which was possessed by himself over servants and soldiers.

10. *Jesus wondered.* Wonder cannot apply to God, for it arises out of what is new and unexpected: but it might exist in Christ, for he had clothed himself with our flesh, and with human affections. *Not even in Israel have I found so great faith* This is not spoken absolutely, but in a particular point of view. For, if we consider all the properties of faith, we must conclude that the faith of Mary was greater, in believing that she would be with child by the Holy Ghost, and would bring forth the only-begotten Son of God, and in acknowledging the son whom she had borne to be her God, and the Creator of the whole world, and her only Redeemer.

But there were chiefly two reasons why Christ preferred the faith of a Gentile to the faith of all the Jews. One was, that a slight and inconsiderable acquaintance with doctrine yielded so sudden and abundant fruit. It was no small matter to declare, in such lofty terms, the power of God, of which a few rays only were yet visible in Christ. Another reason was, that while the Jews were excessively eager to obtain outward signs, this Gentile asks no visible sign, but openly declares that he wants nothing more than the bare word. Christ was going to him: not that it was necessary, but to try his faith; and he applauds his faith chiefly on

504 "Pource que Christ avoit receu la vertu de donner gairison;"— "because Christ had received the power of giving healing."

the ground of his resting satisfied with the bare word. What would another have done, and he too one of the Apostles? Come, Lord, see and touch. This man asks no bodily approach or touch, but believes the word to possess such efficacy as fully to expect from it that his servant will be cured.

Now, he ascribes this honor to the word, not of a man, but of God: for he is convinced that Christ is not an ordinary man, but a prophet sent by God. And hence may be drawn a general rule. Though it was the will of God that our salvation should be accomplished in the flesh of Christ, and though he seals it daily by the sacraments, yet the certainty of it must be obtained from the word. Unless we yield such authority to the word, as to believe that, as soon as God has spoken by his ministers, our sins are undoubtedly forgiven, and we are restored to life, all confidence of salvation is overthrown.

11. *Many will come from the east and west* In the person of the servant, Christ gave to the Gentiles a taste and a kind of first-fruits of his grace. He now shows, that the master is an example of the future calling of the Gentiles, and of the spread of faith throughout the whole world: for he says that *they will come,* not only from the neighboring countries, but from the farthest bounds of the world. Though this had been clearly foretold by many passages of the prophets, it appeared at first strange and incredible to the Jews, who imagined that God was confined to the family of Abraham. It was not without astonishment that they heard, that those who were at that time strangers, would be citizens and heirs of the kingdom of God: and not only so, but that the covenant of salvation would be immediately proclaimed, that the whole world might be united in one body of the Church. He declares, that the Gentiles, who shall come to the faith, will be partakers of the same salvation *with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* Hence we draw the certain conclusion, that the same promise, which has been held out to us in Christ, was formerly given to the fathers; for we would not have had an inheritance in common with them, if the faith, by which it is obtained, had not been the same. The word ἀνακλιθήσονται, *shall recline,* contains an allusion to a banquet: but as we know, that the heavenly life does not require meat and drink, this phrase has the same meaning as if he had said, *they shall enjoy the same life*

12. *But the children of the kingdom* Why does he call those persons *children of the kingdom,* who were nothing less than children of Abraham? for those who are aliens from the faith have no right to be considered a part of God's flock. I answer: Though they did not actually belong to the Church of God, yet, as they occupied a place in the Church, he allows them this designation. Besides, it ought to be observed that, so long as the covenant of God remained in the family of Abraham, there was such force in it, that the inheritance of the heavenly kingdom belonged peculiarly to them. With respect to God himself, at least, they were *holy branches from a holy root,* (Romans 11:16) and the rejection of them, which afterwards followed, shows plainly enough, that they belonged, at that time, to the family of God. Secondly, it ought to be observed, that Christ does not now speak of individuals, but of the

whole nation. This was still harder to endure than the calling of the Gentiles. That the Gentiles should be admitted, by a free adoption, into the same body with the posterity of Abraham, could scarcely be endured: but that the Jews themselves should be driven out, to make way for their being succeeded by the Gentiles, appeared to them altogether monstrous. Yet Christ declares that both will happen: that God will admit strangers into the bosom of Abraham, and that he will exclude *the children* There is an implied contrast in the phrase, *the darkness that is without* It means that out of the kingdom of God, which is the kingdom of light, nothing but darkness reigns. By *darkness* Scripture points out that dreadful anguish, which can neither be expressed nor conceived in this life.[505]

13. *Go away, and as thou believest, so may it be to thee* Hence it is evident how graciously Christ pours out his grace, when he finds the vessel of faith open. Though he addresses these words to the centurion, there can be no doubt that, in his person, he invites us all to strong hope. Hence we are also taught the reason why God is, for the most part, so limited in his communications to us: it is because our unbelief does not permit him to be liberal. If we open up the entrance to him by faith, he will listen to our wishes and prayers.

505 "Laquelle la bouche de l'homme ne sauroit exprimer, ni ses sens comprendre en ce monde;" — "which the mouth of man cannot express, nor his senses comprehend, in this world."

LUKE 7:11-17

Luke 7:11-17
11. And it happened, when he departed, that he went into a city, which was called Nain, and many of his disciples, and a great multitude, went along with him. **12**. And as he was approaching to the gate of the city, there was carried out a dead man, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow: and a great multitude from the city was with her. **13**. And when the Lord saw her, he was moved with compassion towards her, and said to her, Weep not. **14**. And approaching he touched the coffin, (and they who were carrying it stood still,) and said, Young man, I say to thee, Arise. **15**. And he who was dead sat up, and began to speak, and he gave him to his mother. **16**. And fear seized all, and they glorified God, saying, A great Prophet hath risen up among us, and God hath visited his people. **17**. And this report concerning him was spread throughout all Judea, and all the neighboring country.

Luke 7:11. *And it happened, that he went into a city.* In all the miracles of Christ, we must attend to the rule which Matthew lays down. We ought to know, therefore, that this young man, whom Christ raised from the dead, is an emblem of the spiritual life which he restores to us. The name of the city contributes to the certainty of the history. The same purpose is served by what Luke says, that *a great multitude* from every direction followed him: for Christ had many attendants along with him, and many persons accompanied the woman, as a mark of respect, to the interment of her son. The resurrection of the young man was beheld by so many witnesses, that no doubt could be entertained as to its truth. There was the additional circumstance of its being a crowded place: for we know that public assemblies were held at the gates. That the dead man was carried out of the city was in accordance with a very ancient custom among all nations. *Jerome* says that, in his time, the city of Nain was still in existence, two miles below Mount Tabor, in a southerly direction.

12. *The only son of his mother.* The reason which induced Christ to restore the young man to life was, that he saw the *widow* bereft of her *only son,* and had compassion on her: for he did not withhold his favor till some one requested it, as he did on other occasions; but anticipated the prayers of all, and *restored the son to his mother,* by whom nothing of this sort was expected. We have here a striking emblem of his freely bestowed compassion in raising us from death to life. *By touching the coffin* he intended perhaps to show, that he would by no means shrink from death and the grave, in order to obtain life for us. He not only deigns to touch us with his hand, in order to quicken us when we are dead, but, in order that he might raise us to heaven, himself descends into the grave.

14. *Young man, I say to thee.* By this word Christ proved the truth of the saying of Paul, that *God calleth those things which are not, as they were,* (Romans 4:17.) He addresses the

dead man, and makes himself be heard, so that death is suddenly changed into life. We have here, in the first place, a striking emblem of the future resurrection, as Ezekiel is commanded to say, *O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord,* [37:4.] Secondly, we are taught in what manner Christ quickens us spiritually by faith. It is when he infuses into his word a secret power, so that it enters into dead souls, as he himself declares,

> The hour cometh, when the dead shall hear the voice of
> the Son of God, and they who hear shall live, (John 5:25.)

16. *And fear seized all* A sense of the divine presence must have brought *fear* along with it: but there is a difference between the kinds *of fear* Unbelievers either tremble and are dismayed; or, struck with alarm, murmur against God: while devout and godly persons, moved by reverence, willingly humble themselves. *Fear,* therefore, is here taken in a good sense, because they gave the honor which was due to the power of God which they had beheld, and rendered to God not only homage, but thanksgiving.

God hath visited his people I understand this to refer not to every kind of *visitation,* but to that which would restore them to their original condition. Not only were the affairs of Judea in a depressed state, but they had sunk under a wretched and frightful slavery, as if God were not looking at them. The only remaining hope was, that God had promised to be their Redeemer, after they had endured very heavy calamities. I have no doubt, therefore, that they were excited by the miracle to expect an approaching restoration to prosperity: only they fall into a mistake as to the nature of the *visitation* Though they acknowledge and celebrate the unwonted grace of God in this respect, that *a great Prophet hath risen up among us,* yet this eulogium comes very far short of the dignity and glory of the promised Messiah. Hence it appears that the faith of that people was, at this time, exceedingly confused, and involved in many unfounded imaginations.

MATTHEW 8:19-22; LUKE 9:57-62

Matthew 8:19-22	Luke 9:57-62
19. And a scribe approaching said to him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou shalt go. **20**. And Jesus saith to him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. **21**. And another of his disciples said to him, Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father. **22**. And Jesus said to him, Follow me, and allow the dead to bury their dead.	**57**. And it happened, while they were walking in the way, one said to him, I will follow thee withersoever thou shalt go. **58**. Jesus said to him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. **59**. And he said to another, Follow me. And he said, Lord, permit me to go first and bury my father. **60**. And Jesus said to him, Allow the dead to bury their dead: but go thou and proclaim the kingdom of God. **61**. And another said to him, I will follow thee, Lord, but permit me first to bid farewell to those who are in my house. **62**. Jesus said to him, No man who, having put his hand to the plough, shall look back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

Matthew 8:19. *And a scribe approaching.* Two men are here presented to us by Matthew, and three by Luke, all of whom were prepared to become disciples of Christ, but who, having been prevented by a diversity of vices from following the right course, receive a corresponding variety of replies. It might at first sight appear strange, that Christ sends back, and does not admit into his family, one who offers to follow him immediately and without delay: while he detains another along with him who, by asking leave for a time, showed himself to be slower and less willing. But there are the best reasons for both. Whence arose the great readiness of the *scribe* to prepare himself immediately to accompany Christ, but from his not having at all considered the hard and wretched condition of his followers? We must bear in mind that he was a *scribe,* who had been accustomed to a quiet and easy life, had enjoyed honor, and was ill-fitted to endure reproaches, poverty, persecutions, and the cross. He wishes indeed to follow Christ, but dreams of an easy and agreeable life, and of dwellings filled with every convenience; whereas the disciples of Christ must walk among thorns, and march to the cross amidst uninterrupted afflictions. The more eager he is, the less he is prepared. He seems as if he wished to fight in the shade and at ease, neither annoyed by sweat nor by dust, and beyond the reach of the weapons of war. There is no reason to wonder that Christ rejects such persons: for, as they rush on without consideration, they are distressed by the first uneasiness of any kind that occurs, lose courage at the first attack, give way, and

basely desert their post. Besides, this scribe might have sought a place in the family of Christ, in order to live at his table without expense, and to feed luxuriously without toil. Let us therefore look upon ourselves as warned, in his person, not to boast lightly and at ease, that we will be the disciples of Christ, while we are taking no thought of the cross, or of afflictions; but, on the contrary, to consider early what sort of condition awaits us. The first lesson which he gives us, on entering his school, is to *deny ourselves, and take up his cross,* (Matthew 16:24.)

20. *Foxes have holes.* The Son of God describes by these words what was his condition while he lived on the earth, but, at the same time, informs his disciples what sort of life they must be prepared to expect. And yet it is strange that Christ should say, that he had not a foot of earth on which he could *lay his head,* while there were many godly and benevolent persons, who would willingly receive him into their houses. But this was spoken, it ought to be observed, as a warning to the scribe, not to expect an abundant and rich hire, as if he had a wealthy master, while the master himself receives a precarious subsistence in borrowed houses.

21. *Lord, permit me to go first and bury my father.* We have said, that the scribe was rejected by Christ as a follower, because he made his offer without consideration, and imagined that he would enjoy an easy life. The person whom Christ retains had an opposite fault. He was prevented from immediately obeying the call of Christ by the weakness of thinking it a hardship to leave his father. It is probable that his father was in extreme old age: for the mode of expression, *Permit me to bury,* implies that he had but a short time to live. Luke says that Christ ordered him to *follow;* while *Matthew* says that he was *one of his disciples* But he does not refuse the calling: he only asks leave for a time to discharge a duty which he owes to his father.[506] The excuse bears that he looked upon himself as at liberty till his father's death. From Christ's reply we learn, that children should discharge their duty to their parents in such a manner that, whenever God calls them to another employment, they should lay this aside, and assign the first place to the command of God. Whatever duties we owe to men must give way, when God enjoins upon us what is immediately due to himself. All ought to consider what God requires from them as individuals, and what is demanded by their particular calling, that earthly parents may not prevent the claims of the highest and only Father of all from remaining entire.

22. *Allow the dead to bury their dead.* By these words Christ does not condemn burial: for it would have been shameful and cruel to throw away the bodies of the dead unburied, and we know that the custom of burying originated in a divine command, and was practiced by the saints, in order to strengthen the hope of the last resurrection. He intended only to

506 "Jusque a ce qu'il se soit acquitte envers son pere du devoir que nature commande;" — "until he has discharged that duty to his father which nature requires."

show, that what ever withdraws us from the right course, or retards us in it, deserves no other name than *death* Those only live, he tells us, who devote all their thoughts, and every part of their life, to obedience to God; while those who do not rise above the world, — who devote themselves to pleasing men, and forget God, — are like *dead men,* who are idly and uselessly employed in taking care of the dead.

Luke 9:60. *But go thou and proclaim the kingdom of God.* Matthew has only the words, *Follow me:* but Luke states more fully the reason why he was called, which was, that he might be a minister and preacher of the Gospel. Had he remained in a private station, there would have been no absolute necessity for leaving his father, provided he did not forsake the Gospel on his father's account.[507] But the preaching of the Gospel does not allow him to remain at home, and therefore Christ properly takes him away from his father. While the amazing goodness of Christ appears in bestowing so honorable an office on a man who was still so weak, it deserves our notice, that the fault which still cleaved to him is corrected, and is not overlooked and encouraged.

Luke 9:61. *And another said.* Matthew does not mention this third person. It appears that he was too strongly attached to the world, to be ready and prepared to follow Christ. True, he offers to join the family of Christ, but with this reservation, *after he has bid farewell to those who are in his house;* that is, after he has arranged his business at home, as men are wont to do when preparing for a journey. This is the true reason why Christ reproves him so severely: for, while he was professing in words that he would be a follower of Christ, he turned his back upon him, till he had despatched his worldly business.

62. *He who, after having put his hand to the plough, shall look back, is unfit for the kingdom of God.* We must carefully inquire what this declaration of Christ means. They are said to *look back,* who become involved in the cares of the world, so as to allow themselves to be withdrawn from the right path; particularly, when they plunge themselves into those employments which disqualify them to follow Christ.

507 "Pour faire son devoir envers son pere;" — "to do his duty to his father."

MATTHEW 9:1-8; MARK 2:1-12; LUKE 5:17-26

Matthew 9:1-8	Mark 2:1-12	Luke 5:17-26
1. And entering into a ship, he passed over, and came into his own city. **2**. And, lo, they brought to him a paralytic lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Take courage, my son, thy sins are forgiven thee. **3**. And, lo, some of the scribes said among themselves, This man blasphemeth. **4**. And when Jesus saw their thoughts, he said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? **5**. For whether is it easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? **6**. But that you may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins, (then he saith to the paralytic,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go away to thy house. **7**. And he arose, and went away to his house. **8**. And the multitudes who saw it wondered, and glorified God, who had given such authority to men.	**1**. And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was reported that he was in the house. **2**. And immediately many were assembled, so that the places which were around the door did not now contain them, and he preached the word to them. **3**. And they come to him, bringing a paralytic, who was carried by four persons. **4**. And when they could not approach him on account of the crowd, they uncovered the roof of the house in which he was, and having made an opening in the roof, they lower the couch on which the paralytic lay. **5**. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, thy sins are forgiven thee. **6**. And some of the scribes were sitting there, and thinking [508] in their hearts, **7**. Why does this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? **8**. And immediately when Jesus knew by his Spirit that they thought thus within themselves, he said to them, Why do you think those	**17**. And it happened on a certain day, and he was teaching: and Pharisees and doctors of the law were sitting, who had come out of every village of Galilee and Judea, and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. **18**. And, lo, men carrying on a bed, a man who was a paralytic, and they sought to bring him in, and to place him before him. **19**. And not finding a way by which they could bring him in on account of the crowd, they went up to the roof, and lowered him by cords with the bed into the midst before Jesus. **20**. And when he saw their faith, he said to him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee. **21**. And the scribes and Pharisees began to think, saying, Who is this that speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? **22**. And when Jesus knew their thoughts, he answering said to them, What do you think in your hearts? **23**. Whether it is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven

508 "Et disputoyent en leurs coeurs;" — "and were disputing in their hearts."

	things in your hearts? **9**. Whether it is easier to say to the paralytic, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Rise, and take up thy bed, and walk? **10**. But that you may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the paralytic,) **11**. I say to thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go away to thy house. **12**. And immediately he arose, and having taken up the bed, went out in the presence of all, so that all were astonished, and glorified God, saying, We never saw such a thing.	thee, or to say, Arise, and walk? **24**. But that you may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth, (he saith to the paralytic,) I say to thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go to thy house. **25**. And immediately rising up before them, he took up the bed on which he had been lying, and went away to his own house, glorifying God. **26**. And amazement seized all, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen incredible things today.

Matthew 9:1. *And came into his own city.* This passage shows, that *Capernaum* was generally believed to be the birth-place of Christ, because his visits to it were frequent: for there is no room to doubt, that it is the same history which is related by the three Evangelists, though some circumstances may be more exactly related by one of them than by another. Luke says that scribes had come from various parts of Judea, who were spectators when Christ *healed* the p*aralytic;* and at the same time states indirectly, that there were others who also received *healing* through the grace of Christ. For, before he comes to the *paralytic,* he speaks in the plural number, and says, that the power of God was displayed for healing *their* diseases; *the power of the Lord was present to heal them* The glory of this miracle was very remarkable. A man destitute of the use of all his limbs, lying on a bed, and lowered by cords, suddenly rises up in health, vigor, and agility. Another special reason why the Evangelists dwell more on this miracle than on others is, that the scribes were offended at Christ for claiming power and *authority to forgive sins;* while Christ intended to confirm and seal that authority by a visible sign.

2. *And when Jesus saw their faith.* It is God alone, indeed, who knows *faith:* but they had given evidence of *faith* by the laboriousness of that attempt: for they would never have submitted to so much trouble, nor contended with such formidable hindrances, if they had not derived courage from entire confidence of success. The fruit of their faith appeared in

their not being wearied out, when they found the entrance closed up on all sides. The view which some take of these words, that Christ, as a divine person, knew their faith, which lay concealed within them, appears to me a forced interpretation.

Now, as Christ granted to their *faith* the favor which he bestowed on the p*aralytic,* a question is usually raised on this passage how far do men derive advantage from the faith of others? And, first, it is certain, that the faith of Abraham was of advantage to his posterity, when he embraced the free covenant offered to him and to his seed. We must hold a similar belief with regard to all believers, that, by their faith, the grace of God is extended to their children and their children's children even before they are born. The same thing takes place in infants, who are not yet of such an age as to be capable of faith. With regard to adults, on the other hand, who have no faith of their own, (whether they be strangers, or allied by blood,) the faith of others can have nothing more than an indirect influence in promoting the eternal salvation of their souls. As the prayers, by which we ask that God will turn unbelievers to repentance, are not without advantage, our faith is evidently of such advantage to them, that they do not arrive at salvation, till they have been made partakers of the same faith with us in answer to our prayers. But where there is a mutual agreement in faith, it is well known that they promote the salvation of each other. It is also beyond all question, that earthly blessings are often, for the sake of the godly, bestowed on unbelievers.

With regard to the present passage, though Christ is said to have been moved by the faith of others, yet the *paralytic* could not have obtained *the forgiveness of his sins,* if he had had no faith of his own. Unworthy persons were often restored by Christ to health of body, as God daily *maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good,* (Matthew 5:45) but there is no other way in which he is reconciled to us than by faith. There is a *synecdoche,* therefore, in the word *their,* when it is said that *Jesus saw their faith:* for Christ not only looked at those who brought the paralytic, but looked also at *his* faith.

Thy sins are forgiven thee. Christ appears here to promise to the paralytic something different from what he had requested: but, as he intends to bestow health of body, he begins with removing the cause of the disease, and at the same time reminds the paralytic of the origin of his disease, and of the manner in which he ought to arrange his prayers. As men usually do not consider that the afflictions which they endure are God's chastisements, they desire nothing more than some alleviation in the flesh, and, in the meantime, feel no concern about their sins: just as if a sick man were to disregard his disease, and to seek only relief from present pain.[509] But the only way of obtaining deliverance from all evils is to have God reconciled to us. It does sometimes happen, that wicked men are freed from their distresses, while God is still their enemy: but when they think that they have completely escaped, the

509 "Cherchoik seulement remede a la douleur presente, qui n'est qu'un accident particulier de son mal;" — "sought only a remedy for the present pain, which is but a particular accident of his disease."

same evils immediately return, or more numerous and heavier calamities overwhelm them, which make it manifest that they will not be mitigated or terminated. until the wrath of God shall be appeased, as God declares by the Prophet Amos

If thou escape a lion, a bear shall meet thee;
if thou shut thyself up at home, a serpent shall bite thee,
(Amos 5:19.)

Thus it appears that this is a frequent and ordinary way of speaking in the Scriptures, to promise the pardon of sins, when the mitigation of punishments is sought. It is proper to attend to this order in our prayers. When the feeling of afflictions reminds us of our sins, let us first of all be careful to obtain pardon, that, when God is reconciled to us, he may withdraw his hand from punishing.

3. *And, lo, some of the scribes* They accuse Christ of blasphemy and sacrilege, because he claims for himself what is God's prerogative. The other two Evangelists tell us also that they said, *Who can forgive sins but God alone? It* is beyond all question, that their eagerness to slander drove them to this wicked conclusion. If they think that there is any thing which deserves blame, why do they not inquire into it?[510] Besides, as the expression admits of more than one meaning, and as Christ said nothing more than what the Prophets frequently say when they announce the grace of God, why do they take in a bad sense what admits of a favorable interpretation? They must have been already poisoned by malice and envy, otherwise they would not so eagerly have seized an occasion of blaming Christ. They remain silent, but *think in their hearts,* that they may slander him when absent among people of their own class. It is no doubt true, that God alone has power and *authority to forgive sins:* but they are wrong in concluding that it does not belong to Christ, for he is *God manifested in the flesh,* (1 Timothy 3:16.) They had a right to inquire on what grounds Christ laid claim to such *authority:* but, without any inquiry, they suppose him to be one of the common rank of men, and proceed rashly to condemn him.

4. *And when Jesus saw their thoughts* He now gives a proof of his Divinity in bringing to light their secret thoughts: *for who knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of man which is in him?* (1 Corinthians 2:11.) And so Mark adds, that *Jesus knew by his Spirit:* which means, that what was concealed in their hearts could not be perceived by man, but that Christ by his Divine Spirit knew it thoroughly. *Why do you think evil?* This does not imply that it gave them pain to see a mortal man assuming what God claims as his own prerogative, but that they proudly and wickedly rejected God, who was openly manifested to them.

510 "s'ils pensent qu'il y ait quelque chose digne de reprendre aux paroles de Christ, que ne parlent-ils a luy pour en avoir resolution?" — "If they think that there is any thing worthy of blame in the words of Christ, why do they not speak to him to have it explained?"

5. *Whether is it easier to say?* The meaning is, that, as it is not easier to quicken by a word a body which is nearly dead than to forgive *sins,* there is no reason to wonder that he *forgives sins,* when he has accomplished the other. The argument which our Lord uses may appear to be not well-founded: for, in proportion as the soul is more excellent than the body, the forgiveness of sins is a greater work than the healing of the body. But the reply is easy. Christ adapts his discourse to their capacity: for, being carnal, they were more powerfully affected by outward signs, than by all the spiritual power of Christ, which related to eternal salvation. Thus he proves the efficacy of the Gospel for quickening men from the fact, that at the last day he will raise the dead by his voice out of their graves.

Wonder not at this: for the hour is coming, in which all who are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth,

(John 5:28,29.)

This was a sufficiently powerful argument to refute those who reckoned a visible miracle of more importance than all things else. They could not say that he had no right to *forgive the sins* of the paralytic, when he restored to him health and rigour: for this was a result which followed from the forgiveness of sins.

6. *That the Son of man hath authority on earth.* This *authority* is very different from what was given to the apostles, and from what is now exercised by the pastors of the Church: for they cannot so properly be said to *pardon sins,* as to declare that they are pardoned, when they deliver the commission which is entrusted to them. By these words Christ declares that he is not only the minister and witness, but likewise the author, of this grace. But what means this restriction, *on earth?* Of what avail will it be to us to have obtained pardon here, if it be not ratified in heaven? Christ's meaning was, that forgiveness of sins ought not to be sought from a distance: for he exhibits it to men in his own person, and as it were in his hands. So strong is our inclination to distrust, that we never venture to believe that God is merciful to us, till he draws near, and speaks familiarly to us. Now, as Christ descended to earth for the purpose of exhibiting to men the *grace* of God as present, he is said to *forgive sins* visibly, because in him and by him the will of God was revealed which, according to the perception of the flesh, had been formerly hidden above the clouds.

8. *And the multitudes who saw* Instead of *astonishment* which Matthew mentions,[511] the other two Evangelists employ the word ἔκστασις, or amazement: and Luke adds *fear*

511 It is remarkable that all the Latin editions which I have examined, — the highly and justly celebrated Amsterdam edition, two Geneva editions, and Tholuck's, — give the reading, "cujus meminit *Lucas," which Luke mentions,* instead of "cujus meminit Matthoeus*," which Matthew mentions,* as the sense would have required. Matthew says, ἐθαύμασαν, *they wondered,* or *were astonished* Mark uses a part of the verb ἐξίσταμαι ὥστε ἐξίστασθαι πάντας,, *so that all were amazed;* and Luke uses the cognate noun, καὶ ἔκστασις ἔλαβν ἅπανατας *and amazement seized all* Still, the blunder must have been a slip of Calvin's pen, and would have been permitted to remain in the text, if there had not been express authority for the alteration in his own French version. — *Ed.*

But the design of all the Evangelists is to show, that the power of God was not merely acknowledged, but that all were struck with *astonishment,* and compelled to give glory to God. *The fear,* which followed the *astonishment,* had the effect of preventing them from opposing Christ, and of making them submit to him with reverence as a Prophet of God. Matthew expressly says, *that they glorified God, who had given such authority to men* Here they appear to be partly mistaken: for, though they see a man with their eyes, they ought to have perceived in him, by the mind, something higher than man. They are no doubt right in saying, that the nature of man received great honor in Christ for the general advantage of the human race: but as they do not perceive him to be *God manifested in the flesh,* (1 Timothy 3:6,) their confession is involved in some error.[512] In a word, it was true, that *God gave such authority to* men: but the form and manner of giving was not yet understood by those who were not aware that the majesty of God was united to flesh.

512 "De quelque erreur et ignorance;" — "in some error and ignorance."

MATTHEW 9:9-13; MARK 2:13-17; LUKE 5:27-32

Matthew 9:9-13	Mark 2:13-17	Luke 5:27-32
9. And Jesus, passing on, saw a man sitting at the custom-house, named Matthew, and saith to him, Follow me. And he arose and followed [513] him. **10**. And it happened that he was reclining in that man's house, and, lo, many publicans and sinners who had come, reclined together with Jesus and his disciples. **11**. And the Pharisees, when they saw it, said to his disciples, Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners? **12**. But Jesus, when he had heard it, said to them, Not they who are in health have need of a physician, but they who are diseased. **13**. But rather go, and learn what that means, I wish mercyh, and not sacrifice: for I came not to call righteous persons, but sinners, to repentance.	**13**. And he departed again towards the sea, and the whole multitude came to him, and he taught them. **14**. And while Jesus was passing along, he saw Levi, the son of Alpheus, sitting at the custom-house, and said to him, Follow me: and he arose and followed him. **15**. And it happened, while he was reclining in that man's house, many publicans and sinners [514] also reclined along with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many who followed him. **16**. And the scribes and Pharisees, when they saw him taking food with publicans and sinners, said to his disciples, Why is it that he eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners? **17**. Jesus, having heard this, saith to them, Not they who are in health have need of a physician, but they who are diseased. I came not	**27**. And after these things he went out, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the custom-house, and said to him, Follow me. **28**. And he left all, and followed him. [515] **29**. And Levi made him a great banquet in his house; and there was a great multitude of publicans and others, who reclined with them. **30**. And the scribes and Pharisees [516] murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do you eat and drink with publicans and sinners? **31**. And Jesus answering said to them, Not they who are in health need a physician, but they who are diseased. **32**. I came not to call righteous persons, but sinners, to repentance.

513 "Surgens assequutus est;" — "rising followed."

515 There is nothing here answering to ἀναστὰς, *rising up* But the omission must have been accidental: for the French version runs thus: "lequel se levant, abandonna tout, et suivit;" — "who, rising up, forsook all, and followed." — *Ed.*

516 "Et ceux d'entre eux qui estoyent scribes et Pharisiens;" —"and those among them who were scribes and Pharisees."

514 "Gens de mauvaise vie;" — "people of bad life."

	to call righteous persons, but sinners to repentance.	

Matthew 9:9. *Jesus saw a man sitting at the customhouse.* The *custom-house* has usually been a place noted for plundering and for unjust exactions, and was at that time particularly infamous. In the choice of Matthew out of that place, not only to be admitted into the family of Christ, but even to be called to the office of Apostle, we have a striking instance of the grace of God. It was the intention of Christ to choose simple and ignorant persons to that rank, in order to cast down *the wisdom of the world,* (1 Corinthians 2:6.) But this publican, who followed an occupation little esteemed and involved in many abuses, was selected for additional reasons, that he might be an example of Christ's undeserved goodness, and might show in his person that the calling of all of us depends, not on the merits of our own righteousness, but on his pure kindness. Matthew, therefore, was not only a witness and preacher, but was also a proof and illustration of the grace exhibited in Christ. he gives evidence of his gratitude in not being ashamed to hand down for perpetual remembrance the record of what he formerly was, and whence he was taken, that he might more fully illustrate in his person the grace of Christ. In the same manner Paul says:

> This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief, (1 Timothy 1:15.)

As to Mark and Luke calling him *Levi,* it appears that this was his ordinary name:[517] but that his being a *publican* was the reason why he took a foreign name.

Follow me There is no reason to doubt that Christ explained in many words why he was called, and on what conditions. This is more fully ascertained from Luke, who says, *that he left all, rose up, and followed* Christ: for it would not have been necessary for him to leave all, if he had not been a private disciple of Christ, and called in expectation of the Apostleship. In the great readiness and eagerness of Matthew to obey, we see the Divine power of the word of Christ. Not that all in whose ears he utters his voice are equally affected in their hearts: but in this man Christ intended to give a remarkable example, that we might know that his calling was not from man.[518]

Luke 5:29. *And Levi made him a great banquet* This appears to be at variance with what Luke relates, that *he left all:* but the solution is easy. Matthew disregarded every hinderance, and gave up himself entirely to Christ, but yet did not abandon the charge of his own domestic affairs. When Paul, referring to the example of soldiers, exhorts the ministers of the

517 "Il est aise a voir que c'estoit son droit nom par lequel les gens du pays l'appeloyent;" — "it is easy to see that it was his right name, by which the people of the country called him."

518 "Qu'il n'a pas este appele par un moyen procedant de l'homme;" — "that he was not called by a method proceeding from man."

word to be free and disentangled from every hinderance, and to devote their labors to the church, he says:

> No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of life,
> that he may please the commander, (2 Timothy 2:4.)

He certainly does not mean, that those who enroll themselves in the military profession divorce their wives, forsake their children, and entirely desert their homes; but that they quit their homes for a time, and leave behind them every care, that they may be wholly employed in war. In the same manner, nothing kept Matthew from following where Christ called; and yet he freely used both his house and his property, as far as the nature of his calling allowed. It was necessary, indeed, that he should leave the *custom-house:* for, had he been detained there, he would not have been a follower of Christ.[519]

It is called *a great banquet,* with reference not to the multitude of the guests, but to the abundance and magnificence of the provisions: for we know that Christ did not practise such austerity, as not to allow himself to be sometimes entertained more splendidly by the rich, provided that there were no superfluity. Yet we cannot doubt that, as he was a remarkable example of temperance, so he exhorted those who entertained him to frugality and moderation in diet, and would never have endured wasteful and extravagant luxuries. Matthew says that *sinners—that* is, men of wicked lives and of infamous *character—came* to the banquet. The reason was, that the *publicans,* being themselves generally hated and despised, did not disdain to associate with persons of that description; for, as moderate correction produces shame and humiliation in transgressors, so excessive severity drives some persons to despair, makes them leave off all shame, and abandon themselves to wickedness. In levying custom or taxes there was nothing wrong: but when the *publicans* saw themselves cast off as ungodly and detestable persons, they sought consolation in the society of those who did not despise them on account of the bad and disgraceful reputation which they shared along with them. Meanwhile, they mixed with adulterers, drunkards, and such characters; whose crimes they would have detested, and whom they would not have resembled, had not the public hatred and detestation driven them to that necessity.

Matthew 9:11. *Why does your Master eat with publicans and sinners?* The scribes attack the disciples of Christ, and, with the view of soliciting them to revolt, reproach him with what was at first sight base and shameful." Of what use was it that he should be their Master, if it were not to withdraw them from the majority of men to lead a holier life? On the contrary, he withdrew them from a respectable and passable condition in life to ungodly licentiousness, and to pollute themselves by wicked companions." Ignorant and wavering disciples might have been induced by such reproaches to desert their Master. But they act

519 "Pource qu'ayant cest empeschement, il n'eust pas peu suivre la compagnie de Christ;" — "because, having that hinderance, he could not have followed the company of Christ."

properly when, not finding themselves sufficiently fortified against such a calumny, they carry their complaint to their Master: for Christ, by opposing the scribes, confirms his disciples for the future.

12. *Not they who are in health need a physician* It is evident from Christ's reply that the scribes erred in two ways: they did not take into account the office of Christ; and, while they spared their own vices, they proudly despised all others. This deserves our particular attention, for it is a disease which has been always very general. Hypocrites, being satisfied and intoxicated with a foolish confidence in their own righteousness, do not consider the purpose for which Christ was sent into the world, and do not acknowledge the depth of evils in which the human race is plunged, or the dreadful wrath and curse of God which lies on all, or the accumulated load of vices which weighs them down.

The consequence is, that they are too stupid to feel the miseries of men, or to think of a remedy. While they flatter themselves, they cannot endure to be placed in their own rank, and think that injustice is done them, when they are classed with transgressors. Our Lord glances at this second error by replying, that *they who are in health have no need of a physician* It is an ironical admission,[520] and is intended to show that they are offended when they see sinners, because they claim righteousness for themselves. Because you are *in health,* (he says,) you despise *the sick,* are offended at them, and cannot endure the sight of them: but a *physician* ought to be affected in a very different manner. He afterwards points out that he must discharge the duties of a *physician,* because he has been sent by the Father *to call sinners*

Though Christ begins with reproof, yet if we desire to make progress in his doctrine, what he has put in the second place must receive our first consideration. He came to quicken the dead, to justify the guilty and condemned, to wash those who were polluted and full of uncleanness, to rescue the lost from hell, to clothe with his glory those who were covered with shame, to renew to a blessed immortality those who were debased by disgusting vices. If we consider that this was his office and the end of his coming, — if we remember that this was the reason why he took upon him our flesh, why he shed his blood, why he offered the sacrifice of his death, why he descended even to hell, we will never think it strange that he should gather to salvation those who have been the worst of men, and who have been covered with a mass of crimes.

He whom you detest appears to you to be unworthy of the grace of Christ. Why then was Christ himself made a sacrifice and a curse, but that he might stretch out his hand to accursed sinners? Now, if we feel disgust at being associated by Baptism and the Lord's Supper with vile men, and regard our connection with them as a sort of stain upon us, we

520 "C'est une concession par ironie, (c'est a dire, moquerie;")—"it is an admission made in irony, (that is, in ridicule.")

ought immediately to descend into ourselves, and to search without flattery our own evils. Such an examination will make us willingly allow ourselves to be washed in the same fountain with the most impure, and will hinder us from rejecting the righteousness which he offers indiscriminately to all the ungodly, the life which he offers to the dead, and the salvation which he offers to the lost.

13. *But rather go and learn* He dismisses and orders them to depart, because he saw that they were obstinate and unwilling to learn. Or rather he explains to them, that they are contending with God and the Prophet, when, in pride and cruelty, they are offended at relief which is given to the wretched, and at medicine which is administered to the sick. This quotation is made from Hosea 6:6:

For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice;
and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings.

The subject of the prophet's discourse had been the vengeance of God against the Jews. That they might not excuse themselves by saying that they were performing the outward worship of God, (as they were wont to boast in a careless manner about their ceremonies,) he declares that God has no delight in *sacrifices,* when their minds are destitute of piety, and when their conduct is at variance with uprightness and righteousness. That the statement, I *desired not sacrifice,* must be understood comparatively, is evident from the second clause, that *the knowledge of God is better than burnt-offerings* By these words he does not absolutely reject *burnt-offerings,* but places them in a rank inferior to piety and faith. We ought to hold, that faith and spiritual worship are in themselves pleasing to God, and that charity and the duties of humanity towards our neighbors are in themselves required; but that *sacrifices* are but appendages, so to speak, which are of no value or estimation, where substantial truth is not found. On this subject I have treated more fully at the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It ought to be observed that there is a *synecdoche* in the word *mercy:* for under one head the prophet embraces all the kindness which we owe to our brethren.

For I came not Though this was spoken for the purpose of reproving the pride and hypocrisy of the scribes, yet it contains, in a general form, a very profitable doctrine. We are reminded that the grace of Christ is of no advantage to us, unless when, conscious of our sins, and groaning under their load, we approach to him with humility. There is also something here which is fitted to elevate weak consciences to a firm assurance: for we have no reason to fear that Christ will reject sinners, to call whom he descended from his heavenly glory. But we must also attend to the expression, *to repentance:* which is intended to inform us that pardon is granted to us, not to cherish our sins, but to recall us to the earnestness of a devout and holy life. He reconciles us to the Father on this condition, that, being redeemed by his blood, we may present ourselves true sacrifices, as Paul tells us:

The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and devoutly in this world, (Titus 2:11,12.)

MATTHEW 9:14-17; MARK 2:18-22; LUKE 5:33-39

Matthew 9:14-17	Mark 2:18-22	Luke 5:33-39
14. Then come to him the disciples of John, saying, For what reason do we and the Pharisees fast often, while thy disciples do not fast? **15**. And Jesus said to them, Can the children of the bridegroom [521] mourn, so long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. **16**. And no man putteth a piece of fresh cloth on an old garment: for that which fills up takes from the garment, and the rent is made worse. **17**. Nor do they put new wine into old bottles; otherwise the bottles burst, and the wine is spilt, and the bottles are lost: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are at the same time preserved.	**18**. And the disciples of John and of the Pharisees were in the habit of fasting; and they come and say to him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, and thy disciples do not fast? **19**. And Jesus saith to them, Can the children of the nuptial bed [522] fast, while the bridegroom is with them? So long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. **20**. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast in those days. **21**. And no person seweth a piece of fresh cloth on an old garment: otherwise the new addition taketh from the old, and the rent is made worse. **22**. And no person putteth new wine into old bottles; otherwise the new wine bursts the bottles, and the wine is spilt, and the bottles are lost: but new wine must be put into new bottles.	**33**. And they said to him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and in the same manner the disciples of the Pharisees, while thine eat and drink? **34**. To whom he saith, Can you make the children of the marriage bed to fast while the bridegroom is with them? **35**. But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them: then shall they fast in those days. **36**. And he spoke a parable to them: No person putteth a piece of a new garment on an old garment; otherwise what is new is torn, and what is added of the new agreeth not with the old. **37**. And no person putteth new wine into old bottles: otherwise the new wine will burst the bottles, and will be spilt, and the bottles will be lost. **38**. But new wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved. **39**. And no person who has drunk old wine immediately desires the

521 "Filii sponsi." — "Les gens de la chambre du marie peuvent ils mener dueil, pendant que le marie est avec eux?" — "Can the children of the married man's chamber be in mourning, while the married man is with them?"

522 "Les gens de nopces;" — "the marriage party."

		new: for he saith, The old is better.

Matthew 9:14. *Then come to him the disciples of John.* Luke represents the *Pharisees* as speaking: Mark appears to connect both. And, indeed, there is no room to doubt that the *Pharisees* maliciously endeavored, by this stratagem, to draw *the disciples of John* to their party, and to produce a quarrel between them and the disciples of Christ. A resemblance in *prayers and fastings* was a plausible pretext for associating at this time: while the different manner in which Christ acted was an occasion of enmity and dislike to men whose temper was unamiable, and who were excessively devoted to themselves.

This example reminds us, that prudence and caution are necessary to prevent wicked and cunning men from sowing divisions among us on any slight grounds. Satan has a wonderful dexterity, no doubt, in laying those snares; and it is an easy matter to distress us about a trifle.[523] But we ought especially to beware lest the unity of faith be destroyed, or the bond of charity broken, on account of outward ceremonies. Almost all labor under the disease of attaching undue importance to the ceremonies and *elements of the world,* as Paul calls them, (Galatians 4:3; Colossians 2:8;) and accordingly they do not hesitate, for the most part, to prefer the merest rudiments to the highest perfection. This is followed by another evil arising out of fastidiousness and pride, when every man would willingly compel the whole world to copy his example. If any thing pleases us, we forthwith desire to make it a law, that others may live according to our pleasure.

When we read that *the disciples of John* were caught by these snares of Satan, let us first learn not to place holiness in outward and indifferent matters, and at the same time to restrain ourselves by moderation and equity, that we may not desire to restrict others to what we approve, but may allow every one to retain his freedom. As to *fasting* and *prayers,* it ought to be understood, that *John* gave his *disciples* a particular training, and that for this purpose they had stated days for *fastings,* a settled form, and fixed hours of prayer. Now, I reckon those *prayers* among outward observances. For, though calling on God holds the first rank in spiritual worship, yet that method of doing it was adapted to the unskilfulness of men, and is justly reckoned among ceremonies and indifferent matters, the observance of which ought not to be too strictly enjoined. Of the reason why John's discipline was more severe than that of Christ we have already spoken, and a more convenient opportunity for treating of it will again occur.

15. *Can the children of the bridegroom mourn?* Christ apologizes for his disciples on the score of the season, alleging that God was still pleased to indulge them in joyous feelings, as if they were present at a marriage: for he compares himself to *the bridegroom,* who enlivens

523 "Pour des choses qui ne valent pas le parler;" — "for things that are not worth talking about."

his friends by his presence. *Chrysostom* thinks that this comparison was taken from the testimony of John the Baptist, *He that hath the bride is the bridegroom,* (John 3:29.) I have no objection to that view, though I do not think that it rests on solid grounds. Let us be satisfied with Christ's declaration, that he spares his disciples, and treats them with gentleness, so long as he is with them. That none may envy them advantages which are of short duration, he gives warning that they will very soon be treated with greater harshness and severity.

The apology rests on this consideration, that fasting and *prayers* are adapted to sorrow and adversity: extraordinary prayers I mean, such as are here mentioned. Christ certainly intended to accustom them, by degrees, to greater patience, and not to lay on them a heavy burden, till they gained more strength. Hence we ought to learn a twofold instruction. When the Lord sometimes endures the weakness of our brethren, and acts towards them with gentleness, while he treats us with greater severity, we have no right to murmur. Again, when we sometimes obtain relief from sorrow and from vexations, let us beware of giving ourselves up to enjoyments; but let us, on the contrary, remember that the nuptials will not always last. *The children of the bridegroom,* or *of the nuptial bed,* is a Hebrew phrase, which denotes the guests at a marriage.[524]

16. *And no man putteth a piece of fresh cloth.* He supports the preceding statement by two comparisons, one of which is taken from *garments,* and the other from vessels of *wine* Those who think that he compares worn-out garments and decayed bottles to the Pharisees, and new wine and fresh cloth to the doctrine of the gospel, have no probability on their side. The comparison is beautifully adapted to the matter in hand, if we explain it as referring to the weak and tender disciples of Christ, and to a discipline more strict than they were able to bear. Nor is it of any consequence that the idea of being *old* does not agree with scholars who were only commencing: for, when Christ compares his disciples to *old bottles* and *torn garments,* he does not mean that they were wasted by long use, but that they were weak and wanted strength. The amount of the statement is, that all must not be compelled indiscriminately to live in the same manner, for there is a diversity of natural character, and all things are not suitable to all; and particularly, we ought to spare the weak, that they may not be broken by violence, or crushed by the weight of the burden. Our Lord speaks according to the custom of the country, when he uses the word *bottles* instead of *tuns* or *casks*[525]

524 *"Les fils de l'espoux,* (comme il y a en tournant de mot a mot,) par une facon de parler des Hebrieux signifient ceux qui sont appelez au banquet des nopces." — "*The children of the bridegroom,* (as the words may be literally rendered,) by a mode of speaking among the Hebrews, denote those who were invited to the marriage banquet."

525 "Au reste, le mot Grec dont use l'Evangeliste signifie proprement des vaisseaux faits de cuir, desquels on usoit pour mettre le vin: comme au- jourdhui nous avons des muids ou des pipes." — "Besides, the Greek word, which the Evangelist employs, literally signifies vessels made of leather, which were used for containing wine: as in the present day we *have hogsheads* or *butts* "

Luke 5:39. *And no person who has drunk old wine.* This statement is given by Luke alone, and is undoubtedly connected with the preceding discourse. Though commentators have tortured it in a variety of ways, I take it simply as a warning to the Pharisees not to attach undue importance to a received custom. For how comes it that wine, the taste of which remains unaltered, is not equally agreeable to every palate, but because custom and habit form the taste? Hence it follows, that Christ's manner of acting towards his disciples is not less worthy of approbation, because it has less show and splendor: as *old wine,* though it does not foam with the sharpness of n*ew wine,* is not less agreeable on that account, or less fitted for the nourishment of the body.

MATTHEW 9:18-22; MARK 5:22-34; LUKE 8:40-48

Matthew 9:18-22	Mark 5:22-34	Luke 8:40-48
18. While he was speaking these things to them, a certain ruler came, and worshipped him, [526] saying, My daughter is now dead; but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she will live. **19**. And Jesus arose, and followed him, and likewise his disciples, **20**. And, lo, a woman, who had been afflicted with a bloody flux for twelve years came behind him, and touched the tuft of his cloak: **21**. For she said within herself, If I shall only touch his cloak, I shall be cured. **22**. But Jesus turned round, and, when he saw her, he said, Take courage, my daughter; thy faith hath cured thee. And the woman was cured from that time.	**22**. And, lo, one of the rulers of the synagogue, by name Jarius, came: and when he had seen him, he fell at his feet. **23**. And he besought him earnestly, saying, My daughter is at the point of death: I entreat that thou wilt come, and lay thy hands upon her, that she may be cured, and she shall live. **24**. And Jesus went away with him: and a great multitude followed him, and they pressed upon him. **25**. And a certain woman, who had been subject to a bloody flux for twelve years, **26**. And had suffered much from many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and had not at all recovered, but had rather grown worse, **27**. When she had heard of Jesus, came in the crowd behind him, and touched his cloak. **28**. For she said, If I shall touch but his cloak, I shall be cured. **29**. And immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she had been delivered from the scourge. **30**. And Jesus suddenly	**40**. And it happened, while Jesus was returning, the multitude received him: for they were all waiting for him. **41**. And, lo, a man came, whose name was Jairus, and he was a ruler of the synagogue, and fell at the feet of Jesus, beseeching him to enter into his house. **42**. For he had an only daughter, about twelve years of age, and she was dying. But while he was going, the multitudes pressed upon him. **43** And a woman, who had been subject to a bloody flux for twelve years, who had spent all her substance on physicians, and could not be cured by an one, **44**. Approached behind, and touched the tuft of his cloak, and immediately her issue of blood was stopped. **45**. And Jesus said, Who is it that touched me? And while all were denying, Peter, and those who were with him, said, Master, the multitudes press upon and distress thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? **46**. And Jesus said, Some person hath touched me: for I know that

526 "Lequel s'enclina devant lui;" — "who bowed down before him."

	knowing in himself that power had gone out from him, turned round in the crowd, and said, Who touched my clothes? **31**. And his disciples said to him, Thou seest the crowd on all sides pressing upon thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? **32**. And he looked around to see her who who had done this. **33**. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had been done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. **34**. And he said to her, Daughter, thy faith hath cured thee: go in peace, and be delivered from thy scourge.	power hath gone out form me. **47**. And the woman seeing that she was not concealed, came trembling, and fell down before his feet, and told him before all the people for what reason she had touched him, and in what manner she had been immediately cured. **48**. And he said to her, Take courage, my daughter: thy faith hath cured; go in peace.

Matthew 9:18. *While he was speaking these things to them.* Those who imagine that the narrative, which is here given by Mark and Luke, is different from that of Matthew, are so clearly refuted by the passage itself, that there is no necessity for a lengthened debate. All the three agree in saying that Christ was requested by *a ruler of the synagogue to enter his house* for the purpose of curing *his daughter* The only difference is, that the name of *Jairus,* which is withheld by Matthew, is mentioned by Mark and Luke; and that he represents the father as saying, *My daughter is dead,* while the other two say that she was in her last moments, and that, while he was bringing Christ, her death was announced to him on the road. But there is no absurdity in saying that Matthew, studying brevity, merely glances at those particulars which the other two give in minute detail. But since all the other points agree with such exactness, since so many circumstances conspire as to give it the appearance of three fingers stretched out at the same time to point out a single object, there is no argument that would justify us in dividing this history into various dates. The Evangelists agree in relating, that while Christ, at the request of *a ruler of the synagogue,* was coming to his house, a woman on the road was secretly cured of *a bloody flux* by *touching his cloak;* and that af-

terwards Christ came into the ruler's house, and raised a dead young woman to life. There is no necessity, I think, for circuitous language to prove that all the three relate the same event. Let us now come to details.

Lo, a certain ruler. Though it is evident from the other two, that his confidence had not advanced so far as to hope that his daughter's life could be restored, there is no room to doubt that, after having been reproved by Christ, he entertained a stronger hope than when he left his house. But Matthew, as we have said, studies brevity, and puts down at the very beginning of his narrative what took place at various times. The manner in which the history must be arranged is this: *Jairus* first requested that his daughter might be cured of her disease, and afterwards that she might be restored from death to life; that is, after that Christ had given him courage to do so. *Worship,* or *adoration,* is here put for k*neeling,* as is evident from the words of Mark and Luke: for Jairus did not render divine honor to Christ,[527] but treated him with respect as a prophet of God; and we all know how common a practice *kneeling* was among eastern nations.

Come and lay thy hand. We have here a bright mirror in which the divine condescension towards us is beheld. If you compare the *ruler of the synagogue* with the centurion, who was a heathen, (Matthew 8:5-10,) you will say that the full brightness of faith shone in the centurion, while scarcely the smallest portion of it was visible in the *ruler* He ascribes to Christ no power except through his touching the person; and, when he has received information of her death, he trembles as if there were no farther remedy. We see, then, that his faith was feeble and nearly exhausted. Yet Christ yields to his prayers, and encourages him to expect a favorable result, and thus proves to us that his faith, however small it might be, was not wholly rejected. Though we have not such abundance of faith as might be desired, there is no reason why our weakness should drive away or discourage us from prayer.

20. *And, lo, a woman who had been afflicted with a bloody flux.* For *twelve successive years* the *bloody flux* had lasted, and the woman was so far from being negligent in seeking remedies, that *she had spent all her substance on physicians* All this is expressly stated by the Evangelists, that the miracle may shine with brighter glory. When an incurable disease was removed so suddenly, and by the mere touch of a garment, it is perfectly obvious that it was not accomplished by human power. The thought of the woman that, *if she only touched* Christ's garment, she would immediately be cured, arose from an extraordinary impulse of the Holy Spirit, and ought not to be regarded as a general rule. We know how eagerly superstition is wont to sport in foolish and thoughtless attempts to copy the saints; but they are apes, and not imitators, who take up some remarkable example without the command of God, and are led rather by their own senses than by the direction of the Spirit.

527 "Car Jairus ne pretendoit pas d'attribuer a Christ un honneur appar-tenant a la majeste Divine;" — "for Jairus did not profess to ascribe to Christ an honor belonging to the Divine majesty."

It is even possible that there was a mixture of sin and error in the woman's *faith,* which Christ graciously bears and forgives. Certainly, when she afterwards thinks that she has done wrong, and *fears and trembles,* there is no apology for that kind of doubt: for it is opposed to faith. Why did she not rather go straight to Christ? If her reverence for him prevented, from what other source than from his mercy did she expect aid? How comes it, then, that she is afraid of offending him, if she was convinced of his favorable regard?

Yet Christ bestows high commendation on her faith. This agrees with what I have lately noticed, that God deals kindly and gently with his people, — accepts their faith, though imperfect and weak, — and does not lay to their charge the faults and imperfections with which it is connected. It was by the guidance of faith, therefore, that the woman approached to Christ. When she stopped at the garment, instead of presenting herself in prayers that she might be cured, inconsiderate zeal may have drawn her a little aside from the right path; particularly as she soon afterwards shows that she had made the attempt with some degree of doubt and uncertainty. Were we even to grant that this was suggested to her by the Spirit, it still remains a fixed rule, that our faith must not be driven hither and thither by particular examples, but ought to rest wholly on the word of God, according to the saying of Paul, *Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,* (Romans 10:17.) This is a highly necessary warning, that we may not dignify with the name of faith any opinion which has been rashly embraced.

Luke 8:45. *Who is it that touched me,* Mark expresses it still more clearly, when he says that Christ *looked around to see* who she was. It does appear to be absurd that Christ should pour out his grace without knowing on whom he was bestowing a favor. There is not less difficulty in what he shortly afterwards says, that *he perceived that power had gone out from him:* as if, while it flowed from him, it was not a free gift bestowed at those times, and on those persons, whom he was pleased to select. Beyond all question, he knowingly and willingly cured the woman; and there is as little doubt that he drew her to himself by his Spirit, that she might obtain a cure: but he puts the question to her, that she may freely and publicly make it known. If Christ had been the only witness of his miracle, his statements might not perhaps have been believed: but now, when the woman, struck with dread, relates what happened to her, greater weight is due to her confession.

Matthew 9:22. *Take courage, my daughter.* This expression shows the weakness of her faith for, had there been no impropriety in her *trembling,* Christ would not have corrected it by exhorting her to *take courage* Yet, at the same time, he commends her *faith;* and this supports the view which I have already stated, that, while she sought Christ by the guidance of the Spirit, and from a sincere and pious desire, she hesitated in such a manner as to need to be strengthened. Thus we see that faith, in order to please God, needs forgiveness, and is at the same time sustained by new aid, that it may acquire additional strength. We may here draw a comparison from the health of the body to that of the soul: for, as Christ says that

the woman's deliverance from her disease was the consequence of her *faith,* so it is certain, that we obtain by faith the forgiveness of sins, which reconciles us to God.

Mark 5:34. *Go in peace, and be delivered from thy scourge.* From this exhortation we infer that the benefit which she had obtained was fully ratified, when she heard from the lips of Christ what she had already learned from experience: for we do not truly, or with a safe conscience, enjoy God's benefits in any other way than by possessing them as contained in the treasury of his promises.

MATTHEW 9:23-26; MARK 5:35-43; LUKE 8:49-56

Matthew 9:23-26	Mark 5:35-43	Luke 8:49-56
23. And when Jesus came into the house of the ruler, and saw the musicians and the multitude making a noise, **24**. He saith to them, Withdraw: for the young woman is not dead, but sleepeth: and they ridiculed him. **25**. And when the multitude was put out, he entered and took hold of her hand, and the girl arose. **26**. And this report spread into all that country.	**35**. While he is still speaking, there come from the ruler of the synagogue persons who say, Thy daughter is dead: why dost thou trouble the Master any farther? **36**. And immediately on hearing the word which was said, he saith to the ruler of the synagogue, Fear not, only believe. **37**. And he did not permit any one to follow him, except Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. **38**. And he came into the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw the tumult, and persons who wept and lamented much. **39**. And he entered, and said to them, Why do you vex yourselves and lament? the girl is not dead, but sleepeth. **40**. And they ridiculed him. But, having put them all out, he taketh the father and mother of the girl, and those who were with him, and entereth where the girl is lying. **41**. And he took hold of the hand of the girl, and said to her, Talithacumi: which is, if one interpret it, Girl, I say to thee, Arise. **42**. And immediately the girl arose, and walked: for	**49**. While he was still speaking, one came from the house of the ruler of the synagogue, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead, do not trouble the Master. **50**. But Jesus, having heard this, replied to the ruler, saying, Fear not, only believe, and she shall be cured. **51**. And when he came into the house, he did not permit any one to enter, except Peter, and James, and John, and the father and mother of the girl. **52**. And all were weeping and bewailing her. But he said, Weep not: she is not dead, but sleepeth. **53**. And they ridiculed him, knowing that she was dead. **54**. And he having put them all out, took hold of her hand, and cried out, saying, Girl, arise. **55**. And her spirit returned, and she immediately arose: and he commanded to give her something to eat. **56**. And her parents were astonished: but he charged them to tell no man what had been done.

	she was twelve years of age. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. **43**. And he charged them earnestly, that no man should know it: and commanded them to give her something to eat.	

Mark 5:36. *Fear not, only believe.* The message about her death had induced despair: for he had asked nothing from Christ but relief to the diseased young woman. Christ therefore bids him take care lest, by fear or distrust, he shut out that grace, to which death will be no hindrance. By this expression, *only believe,* he means that he will not want power, provided Jairus will allow him; and, at the same time, exhorts him to enlarge his heart with confidence, because there is no room to fear that his faith will be more extensive than the boundless power of God. And truly this is the case with us all: for God would be much more liberal in his communications to us, if we were not so close; but our own scanty desires hinder him from pouring out his gifts upon us in greater abundance.[528] In general, we are taught by this passage, that we cannot go beyond bounds in believing: because our faith, however large, will never embrace the hundredth part of the divine goodness.

37. *And did not permit any one to follow him.* He forbade that they should be allowed to enter, either because they were unworthy to be his witnesses of the miracle, or because he did not choose that the miracle should be overpowered by a noisy crowd around him. It was better that the young woman, whose dead body they had beheld, should suddenly go out before the eyes of men, alive and full of rigor. *Mark* and *Luke* tell us that not more than three of the disciples were admitted, and both mention also the parents. *Mark* alone states that those who had accompanied Jairus when he came to supplicate Christ were admitted. Matthew, who is more concise, takes no notice of this circumstance.

Luke 8:52. *And all were weeping.* The Evangelists mention the lamentation, that the resurrection may be more fully believed. *Matthew* expressly states that *musicians* were present, which was not usually the case till the death had been ascertained, and while the preparations for the funeral were going forward. The flute, he tells us, was heard in plaintive airs. Now, though their intention was to bestow this sort of honor on their dead, and as it were to adorn their grave, we see how strongly inclined the world is not only to indulge but

528 "Mais la petitesse, et (par maniere de dire) la chicete de nostre foy, l'empesche de faire decouler plus abondamment ses biens sur nous;" — "But the smallness and (so to speak) the niggardliness of our faith, hinders him from making his benefits flow more abundantly on us."

to promote its faults. It was their duty to employ every method for allaying grief; but as if they had not sinned enough in disorderly lamentation, they are eager to heighten it by fresh excitements. The Gentiles even thought that this was a way of soothing departed spirits; and hence we see how many corruptions were at that time spread throughout Judea.[529]

Mark 5:39 *The girl sleepeth. Sleep* is everywhere in Scripture employed to denote *death;* and there is no doubt but this comparison, taken from temporal rest, points out a future resurrection. But here Christ expressly makes a distinction between *sleep* and *death,* so as to excite an expectation of life. His meaning is, "You will presently see her raised up whom you suppose to be dead." That he was *ridiculed* by thoughtless and ignorant people, who were wholly engrossed with profane lamentation, and who did not comprehend his design, ought not to awaken surprise. And yet this very circumstance was an additional confirmation of the miracle, that those persons entertained no doubt whatever as to her death.

41. *And he took hold of her hand, and said to her* **Luke 8:54.** *And he took hold of her hand, and cried* Though naturally this *cry* was of no avail for recalling the senses of the deceased young woman, yet Christ intended to give a magnificent display of the power of his voice, that he might more fully accustom men to listen to his doctrine. It is easy to learn from this the great efficacy of the voice of Christ, which reaches even to the dead, and exerts a quickening influence on death itself. Accordingly, Luke says that *her spirit returned,* or, in other words, that immediately on being called, it obeyed the command of Christ.

43. *And he charged them* Though Christ did not admit all indiscriminately to behold this resurrection, yet the miracle might not have remained long concealed. And it would indeed have been improper to suppress that power of God, by which the whole world ought to be prepared for life. Why then does he enjoin silence on the young woman's parents? Perhaps it was not so much about the fact itself, as about the manner of it, that he wished them to be silent, and that only for a time; for we see that there were other instances in which he sought out a proper occasion. Those who think that they were forbidden to speak for the purpose of whetting their desire, resort to a solution which is unnatural. I do acknowledge that Christ did not perform this miracle without the intention of making it known, but perhaps at a more fitting time, or after the dismission of a crowd among whom there was no prudence or moderation. He therefore intended to allow some delay, that they might in quietness and composure revolve the work of God.

529 "Dont nous pouvons recueillir comment le pays de Judee estoit lots reinply de beaucoup de corruptions, et diverses sortes d'abus;" — "whence we may infer how much the country of Judea was then filled with many corruptions, and various sorts of abuses."

MATTHEW 9:27-34

Matthew 9:27-34
27. And while Jesus was departing thence, two blind men followed him, crying and saying, Have pity on us, son of David. **28**. And when he had come into the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus saith to them, Do you believe that I can do this? They say to him, Yes, Lord. **29**. Then he touched their eyes, saying, Let it be to you according to your faith. **30**. And their eyes were opened, and Jesus threatened them, [530] saying, See that no man know it. **31**. But when they had departed, they spread the report of it in all that country. **32**. And while they were going out, lo, they brought to him a dumb man, a demoniac. **33**. And when the devil had been cast out, the dumb man spake, and the multitudes wondered, saying, Nothing like this was ever seen in Israel. **34**. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils by the prince of the devils.

Matthew 9:27. *And while Jesus was departing.* The other Evangelists say nothing about these two miracles; for, as we have already said, and as John expressly affirms, (21:25,) they did not intend to record every action of Christ, but only to prove, by a brief summary, that he is the Messiah. Now Matthew relates that sight was restored to *two blind men,* but not so speedily as Christ was wont, on many other occasions, to grant relief to the wretched. While they cry to him on the road, he makes no reply, but, as if he appeared not to notice them, allows them to follow him to his lodging. There he at length asks them what they believe as to his power. Both by action and by words he intended to make trial of their faith; for he holds them in suspense, — nay, passes by as if he did not hear them, — tries their patience, and what root faith had in their heads. When he afterwards inquires if they *believe,* he pursues the same investigation. But it may be asked, if a man is convinced of the power of God and of Christ, is that enough to make him a believer? for such appears to be the meaning of the words,

28. *Do you believe that I can do this?* But from other passages of Scripture, it is evident that our knowledge of his power will be cold and unprofitable, if we are not convinced of his willingness. And yet Christ is satisfied with their reply, and applauds their faith, as if it had been all that could be wished. I answer, they had some perception of his grace; for they had already acknowledged him to be the *Son of David;* bestowing upon him this title as Redeemer of their nation and author of all blessings. He interrogates them, therefore, as to his power, and proceeds farther to inquire if they *believe* in good earnest. Faith embraces the mercy and fatherly love of God along with his power, and the generous design of Christ along with his ability to save. But as men commonly ascribe less than they ought to do to the power of God and the ability of Christ, there was good reason for proposing this question

530 "Jesus leur defendit avee menaces;" — "Jesus forbade them with threatenings."

to the blind men, if they *believe that Christ can do* what they have professed with their mouth. Indeed, Christ wished simply to know if they were candid in yielding to him the honor of Messiah; and therefore he applauds their faith, because under that low and despicable appearance they acknowledged him to be the *Son of David*

29. *According to your faith.* Though the subject of the narrative is a remarkable benefit conferred on *two blind men,* yet from this declaration of Christ we may draw the general doctrine, that if we pray in faith, we will never sustain a refusal in our prayers. But if those two men, whose faith was small and imperfectly formed, obtained what they wished, much more efficacious will now be the faith of those who, endued with the Spirit of adoption, and relying on the sacrifice of Christ, shah approach to God.

30. *And Jesus threatened them* Either he wished to have other persons as witnesses of the miracle, or to delay the publication of it till another time. Their conduct in immediately proclaiming it every where is worthy of blame: for the notion entertained by some, that Christ forbade them for the purpose of exciting them the more, has been already refuted. There was, no doubt, some reason for forbidding it, which is unknown to us; and those men, through inconsiderate zeal, spread the rumor before the proper time.

32. *They brought to him a dumb man* It is probable that this man was not naturally *dumb,* but that, after he had been given up to the devil,[531] he was deprived of the use of speech: for all *dumb* persons are not *demoniacs* He was afflicted in such a manner as to make it evident, by visible signs, that his tongue was held bound by a wicked spirit. The exclamation of the multitudes, on his being cured, that *nothing like it had ever been seen in Israel,* appears to be hyperbolica1:[532] for God had formerly revealed his glory among that people by greater miracles. But perhaps they look to the design of the miracle, as the minds of all were at that time prepared to expect the coming of the Messiah. They intended, no doubt, to exalt this instance of the grace of God, without detracting any thing from what had formerly happened. Besides, it ought to be observed, that this was not a premeditated statement, but a sudden burst of admiration.

34. *But the Pharisees said* Hence it is evident with what rage and fury they were filled, who did not scruple to assail with wicked slander so illustrious a work of God. We ought to observe the contrast between the applause of the people and the blasphemy of those men. The saying of the people, that *nothing like it ever happened in Israel,* is a confession arising from a sense of the divine glory: which makes it the more evident, that those persons were utterly mad who ventured, as it were, to curse God to his face. We learn from it also, that,

531 "Que le diable qui le possedoit luy avoit ost, l'usage de parler;" — "that the devil, who possessed him, had taken from him the use of speech."

532 "Il semble que c'est une facon de parler hyperbolique et excessive;" — "it appears to be a hyperbolical and exaggerated way of speaking."

when wickedness has reached the height of blindness, there is no work of God, however evident, which it will not pervert. It is, no doubt, monstrous and incredible that mortal men should cry against their Creator: but there is so much the greater reason for dreading that blindness, which arises from the Lord's vengeance on the wicked after long-suffering.

MATTHEW 9:35-38

Matthew 9:35-38
35. And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness among the people. **36**. And when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion towards them, because they were destitute and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd. **37**. Then he saith to his disciples, The harvest is indeed abundant, but the laborers are few. **38**. Pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest, to send forth laborers into his harvest.

Matthew 9:35. *And Jesus went about* This statement is made by way of anticipating an objection, and is intended to inform us that the whole ministry of Christ is not minutely described: for he was constantly employed in the discharge of his office; that is, in proclaiming the doctrine of salvation, and in confirming it by the addition of miracles. *The gospel of the kingdom,* we have already said, is a designation given to it from its effect,[533] for in this way God gathered to himself a people sadly scattered, that he might *reign* in the midst of them; and, indeed, he erected his throne for the express purpose of bestowing on all his people perfect happiness. Yet let us remember that we must be subject to God, in order that we may be exalted by him to the heavenly glory.

36. *He was moved with compassion towards them* Hence we infer, first, how great was the indolence of the priests, who, though they were scattered over the whole country, in order to enlighten the people with heavenly doctrine, were *slow-bellies,* (Titus 1:12.) True, they boasted that they were superintendents of the people; and the number of those who gloried in that title was not small. Yet not one of them does Christ own to be a pastor. A similar confusion may now be observed in Popery, though it is full of persons who are called pastors: for there is a prodigious crowd of those who under the name of clergy, eat up the flock. They are *dumb dogs,* (Isaiah 56:10,) and yet are not ashamed to make a vehement sound about their hierarchy. But we must listen to the voice of Christ, who declares, that where there are no *laborers* there are no shepherds, and that those sheep are wandering and scattered which are not collected into the fold of God by the doctrine of the gospel. His being *moved with compassion* proves him to be the faithful servant of the Father in promoting the salvation of his people, for whose sake he had clothed himself with our flesh. Now that he has been received into heaven, he does not retain the same feelings to which he chose to be liable in this mortal life: yet he has not left off the care of his church, but looks after his wandering sheep, or rather, he gathers his flock which had been cruelly chased and torn by the wolves.

533 "a cause de l'effect et du fruict qui s'en ensuit;" — "on account of the effect and of the fruit which follows from it.

37. *The harvest is indeed abundant* By this metaphor he intimates, that many of the people are ripe for receiving the gospel. Though the greater number afterwards rejected basely and with vile ingratitude the salvation offered to them, yet the limited number of the elect, who were mixed with unbelievers, is compared to an *abundant harvest,* because God values a small band of his own people more highly than the rest of the world. Though there were at that time many who assumed this character, yet as few of them discharged it faithfully, he does not rank them among *laborers:* for he employs the word *laborers* in a good sense. When Paul complains (2 Corinthians 2:13) of bad *laborers,* he refers to their boasting: for he would not have bestowed the designation of *laborers*[534] on those who devoted all their exertions to ruin and waste the flock, had it not been that they gloried in the false pretense.

38. *Pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest* As no man will of himself become a sincere and faithful minister of the gospel, and as none discharge in a proper manner the office of teacher but those whom the Lord raises up and endows with the gifts of his Spirit, whenever we observe a scarcity of pastors, we must raise our eyes to him to afford the remedy. There never was greater necessity for offering this prayer than during the fearful desolation of the church which we now see every where around us.

534 ἐργάται δόλιοι, *deceitful workmen.*

MATTHEW 8:23-27; MARK 4:35-41; LUKE 8:22-25

Matthew 8:23-27	Mark 4:35-41	Luke 8:22-25
23. And when he had entered into the ship, [535] his disciples followed him. **24**. And, lo, there was a great swell in the sea, so that the ship was covered with the billows: and he was asleep. **25**. And his disiples approached and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us, we perish. **26**. And he saith to them, Why are you timid, O men of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea: and there was a great calm. **27**. But the men wondered, saying, What sort of man is this: for the winds and the sea obey him?	**35**. And the same day, when it was evening, he said to them, Let us cross to the opposite side. **36**. And having sent away the multitude, they take him even as he was, in the ship. But there were also other ships along with him. **37**. Then ariseth a great storm of wind: and the billows dashed into the ship, so that it was now filled. **38**. And he was at the stern, sleeping upon a pillow: and they awake him, and say to him, Master, hast thou no care that we perish? **39**. And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Silence, be still. And the wind was hushed, and there was a great calm. **40**. And he said to them, Why are you so timid? How have you not confidence? **41**. And they feared with a great fear, and said among themselves, Who is this: for even the wind and the sea obey him?	**22**. And it happened on a certain day, that he went into a ship with his disciples. And he saith to them, Let us cross to the opposite side of the lake: and they set sail. **23**. And while they were sailing, he fell asleep, and a tempest of wind arose in the lake, and they were filled with water, and were in danger. **24**. And they approached and awoke him, saying, Master, Master, we perish. But he arose, and rebuked the wind and the tempest of the water; and they ceased, and there was a calm. **25**. And he said to them, Where is your faith? And they were afraid, and wondered, saying among themselves, Who is this? for he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.

As we shall soon meet again with the mention of a lake, where it is said (Matthew 8:33) that the swine were carried into it with violence, it is not universally agreed whether one

535 "La naselle," — "τὸ πλοῖον."

and the same lake is mentioned in both places. The waters of Gennesareth, all admit,[536] were pleasant and healthful to drink: but the Gadarene lake, Strabo tells us, was so unwholesome and pestilential, that the cattle which drank of it often lost their hair and their hoofs. There is therefore no doubt that there were two separate lakes, and that they were at a considerable distance from each other. There is as little doubt that the lake mentioned here was the lake of Gennesareth; and that Christ, having crossed it, came to the Gadarenes, whom Matthew calls *Geresenes,* (8:28.)

Those who infer, from the diversity of the names, that the narratives are different, through a desire to be thought very acute, fall under the charge of gross ignorance: for the country of the Gergesenes was also called Gadarene, from a celebrated city, Gadara. In the age of Jerome, the name was changed; and, therefore, in accordance with the prevailing custom, he calls them *Geraseaes* That it was the Gadarene lake into which the swine were thrown down by the devils, I have no hesitation in admitting: but when Christ says, *let us cross to the other side,* I cannot explain the reference as made to any other lake than that of Gennesareth.

It remains that we now inquire as to the time, which cannot be learned either from Matthew or from Luke. Mark alone mentions that it was the evening of that day on which Christ discoursed about the preaching of the gospel under the parable of the sower. Hence it is evident, that they did not attend to the order of time; and, indeed, this is expressly stated by Luke, when he says that *it happened on a certain day:* for these words show that he gives himself little concern as to the question which of the events was earlier or later.

Matthew 8:23. *And when he had entered into a ship* Mark says that *other little ships* crossed *along with him:* but that Christ entered into his own ship *with his disciples* Luke too quotes his words: Matthew is more concise. They agree, however, as to the leading fact, that Christ laid himself down to rest, and that, while he was asleep, a tempest suddenly arose. First, it is certain that the storm which agitated the lake was not accidental: for how would God have permitted his Son to be driven about at random by the violence of the waves? But on this occasion he intended to make known to the apostles how weak and inconsiderable their faith still was. Though Christ's sleep was natural, yet it served the additional purpose of making the disciples better acquainted with their weakness. I will not say, as many do, that Christ pretended sleep, in order to try them. On the contrary, I think that he was asleep in such a manner as the condition and necessity of human nature required.

And yet his divinity watched over him, so that the apostles had no reason to fear that consolation would not be immediately provided, or that assistance would not be obtained from heaven. Let us therefore conclude, that all this was arranged by the secret providence

536 "C'est un poinct bien resolu entre tous ceux qui ont escrit;" — "it is a point well agreed among all who have written."

of God, — that Christ was asleep, that a violent tempest arose, and that the waves covered the ship, which was in imminent danger of perishing. And let us learn hence that, whenever any adverse occurrence takes place, the Lord tries our faith. If the distresses grow to such a height as almost to overwhelm us, let us believe that God does it with the same design of exercising our patience, or of bringing to light in this way our hidden weakness; as we see that, when the apostles were covered by the billows,[537] their weakness, which formerly lay concealed, was discovered.

25. *Lord, save us* A pious prayer[538] , one would think: for what else had they to do when they were lost than to implore safety from Christ? But as Christ charges them with unbelief, we must inquire in what respect they sinned. Certainly, I have no doubt that they attached too much importance to the bodily presence of their Master: for, according to Mark, they do not merely pray, but expostulate with him, *Master, hast thou no care that we perish?* Luke describes also confusion and trembling: *Master, Master, we perish* They ought to have believed that the Divinity of Christ was not oppressed by carnal sleep, and to his Divinity they ought to have had recourse. But they do nothing till they are urged by extreme danger; and then they are overwhelmed with such unreasonable fear that they do not think they will be safe[539] till Christ is awakened. This is the reason why he accuses them of unbelief for their entreaty that he would assist them was rather a proof of their faith, if, in confident reliance on his divine power, they had calmly, and without so much alarm, expected the assistance which they asked.

And here we obtain an answer to a question which might be put, and which arises out of his reproof. Is every kind of fear sinful and contrary to faith? First, he does not blame them simply because they fear, but because they are *timid* Mark adds the word οὕτω — *Why are you* so *timid?* and by this term indicates that their alarm goes beyond proper bounds. Besides, he contrasts *faith* with their *fear,* and thus shows that he is speaking about immoderate dread, the tendency of which is not to exercise their faith, but to banish it from their minds. It is not every kind of fear that is opposed to faith. This is evident from the consideration that, if we fear nothing, an indolent and carnal security steals upon us; and thus faith languishes, the desire to pray becomes sluggish, and the remembrance of God is at length extinguished[540] Besides, those who are not affected by a sense of calamities, so as to *fear,* are rather insensible than firm.

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537 "Quand les Apostres se sont trouvez assaillis et quasi couvers des riots du lac;" — "when the Apostles found themselves assaulted, and, as it were, covered by the waves of the lake."

538 "Une priere bonne et sainte;" — "a good and holy prayer.

539 "En sorte qu'il ne leur semble oint qu'il y ait moyen de les sauver, sinon que Christ s'eveeile; — so that they think there will be no way of saving them till Christ is awakened."

540 "Et finalemeat la souvenance que chacun doit avoir de Dieu vient a s'esteindre;" — and, finally, that remembrance of God which every one ought to have, comes to be extinguished."

Thus we see that fear, which awakens faith, is not in itself faulty till it go beyond bounds.[541] Its excess lies in disturbing or weakening the composure of faith, which ought to rest on the word of God. But as it never happens that believers exercise such restraint on themselves as to keep their faith from being injured, their fear is almost always attended by sin. Yet we ought to be aware that it is not every kind of fear which indicates a want of faith, but only that dread which disturbs the peace of the conscience in such a manner that it does not rest on the promise of God.

26. *He rebuked the winds* Mark relates also the words of Christ, by which, addressing the sea, he enjoins *silence,* (σιώπα,) that is, *stillness* not that the lake had any perception, but to show that the power of his voice reached the elements, which were devoid of feeling. And not only the *sea and the winds,* which are without feeling, but wicked men also, with all their obstinacy, obey the commands of God. For when God is pleased to allay the tumults of war, he does not always soften the fierce minds of men, and mould them to obedience, but even while their rage continues, makes the arms to drop from their hands: And thus is fulfilled that declaration,

He maketh wars to cease to the ends of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in pieces, and burneth the chariots in the fire, (Psalm 46:10.)

27. *But the men wondered* Mark and Luke appear to say this in reference to the apostles; for, after having stated that Christ reproved them, they add that they cried out with fear, *Who is this?* It applies, however, more properly to others, who had not yet known Christ. Whether we take the one or the other of these views, the result of the miracle appears in the display of the glory of Christ. If any one shall suppose that it is the apostles who speak, the meaning of the words will be, that his divine power was sufficiently proved by the fact that *the wind and the sea obey him* But as it is more probable that these words were spoken by others, the Evangelists show that the miracle made such an impression on their minds, as to produce a certain reverence for Christ which prepared them for believing on him.

541 "Jusque ace qu'ellc passe mesurc, ct soit excessive;" — "till it go beyond bounds, and become excessive."

MATTHEW 8:28-34; MARK 5:1-20; LUKE 8:26-39

Matthew 8:28-34	Mark 5:1-20	Luke 8:26-39
28. And when he had come to the opposite bank, [542] into the country of the Gergesenes, two demoniacs, who had come from among the tombs, met him: and they were fierce beyond measure, so that no man could pass along that road. **29**. And, lo, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, Son of God? Hast thou come hither before the time to torment us? **30**. And at a distance from them there was a herd of many swine feeding. **31**. And the devils entreated him, saying, If thou cast us out, permit us to remove into the herd of swine. **32**. And he said to them, Go. And when they had gone out, they went away into the heard of swine. And, lo, the whole herd was carried headlong into the sea, and perished in the waters. **33**. And those who had the charge of them fled; and going away into the city, they related all things, and what had happened to the demoni-	**1**. And having crossed the sea, they came into the country of Gaderanes. **2**. And when he left the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man possessed by an unclean spirit, **3**. Who had a dwelling among the tombs, [543] and no man could bind him, not even with chains: **4**. Because frequently, when he had been bound with fetters and chains, the chains were torn asunder by him, and the fetters were broken in pieces, so that no man could tame him. **5**. And always, day and night, he was in the mountains, and among the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. **6**. And when he saw Jesus at a distance, he ran and worshipped him: **7**. And, crying with a loud voice, he said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure thee by God, that thou do not torment me. **8**. For he said to him, Go out of the man, unclean spirit.	**26**. And they sailed to the country of the Gaderenes, which is opposite to Galilee. **27**. And when he had gone out of the ship into the land, there met him a certain man out of the city, who had devils for along time, and wore no clothes, and did not dwell in a house, but among the tombs. **28**. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, [544] and said with a loud voice, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beseech thee, do not torment me. **29**. For he was commanding the unclean spirit to go out of the man: for many times it had seized him, and he was bound by chains, and kept in fetters, and he broke the chains, and was driven by the devil into the deserts. **30**. And Jesus asked him, saying, What is thy name? And he said, Legion: for many devils had entered into him. **31**. And they entreated him that he

542 "Et quarid il fur passd outre, *ou a l'autre rive, cornme au verset* 18;" — "and when he had passed beyond, *or to the other bank, as at* v.18."

543 "Lequel faisoit sa demeurance;" — "who made his dwelling."

544 "Il se jetta devant luy;" — "he threw himself down before him."

acs, **34**. And, lo, the whole city went out to meet Jesus; and when they saw him, they entreated him, that he would depart from their territories.	**9**. And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying to him, My name is Legion: for there are many. **10**. And he entreated him earnestly, that he would not send him out of the country. **11**. And there was there, near the mountains, a great herd of swine feeding. **12**. And all the devils besought him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. **13**. And immediately Jesus permitted them. And the unclean spirit having gone out, entered into the swine, and the herd was carried headlong into the sea: and they were about two thousand, and were choked in the sea. **14**. Then those who tended the swine fled, and told it in the city and in the fields. And they went out to see what it was that had happened. **15**. And they come to Jesus, and see the demoniac who had had the Legion, sitting and clothed, and in his right mind, and they were afraid. **16**. And those who had seen, related how it had happened to the demoniac, and concerning the swine. **17**. And they	would not command them to go into the deep. **32**. And there was there a herd of many swine feeding on the mountains, and they requested him to permit them to enter into them: and he permitted them. **33**. And the devils going out of the man entered into the swine, and the herd ran violently down headlong into the lake, and were choked. **34**. And when those who tended them saw what was done, they fled, and told it in the city and in the villages. **35**. And they went out [545] to see what was done, and came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the devils and had gone out, clothed, and in his right mind, at the feet of Jesus; and they were afraid. **36**. And those who had seen, related to them how the demoniac had been cured. **37**. And the whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes besought him to depart from them: for they were seized with a great fear; and he went up into the ship, and returned back again. **38**. And the man out of whom the devils had departed reques-

545 "Ainsi les gens sortirent pour voir;" — "so the peoplo went out to see."

	began to request him to depart from their territories. **18**. And when he entered into a ship, he who had been possessed by a devil besought him that he might be with him. **19**. But Jesus did not permit him: but said to him, Go to thy home, to thy friends, and relate to them how great things God hath done to thee, and hath pitied thee. **20**. And he went away, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all wondered.	ted to be with him: but Jesus sent him away, saying, **39**. Return to thy house, and relate what things God hath done to thee. [546] And he went away through the whole city proclaiming what thing Jesus had done to him.

The error of those who think that Mark and Luke relate a different miracle from this, has been already refuted. It is the same country which was opposite, as Luke expressly states, to Galilee, that is described by the three Evangelists, and all the circumstances agree. Who then will believe that the same things, so fully coincident at all points, happened at different times?

Matthew 8:28 *Two demoniacs met him* Commentators have been led into the error of separating Matthew's narrative from that of the others by this single difference, that he mentions *two,* while the others mention but one. There is probability in the conjecture of *Augustine,* who thinks that there were two, but accounts for not more than one being mentioned here by saying, that this one was more generally known, and that the aggravation of his disease made the miracle performed on him the more remarkable. And, indeed, we see that Luke and Mark employ many words in describing the extraordinary rage of the devil, so as to make it evident that the wretched man, of whom they speak, was grievously fomented. The circumstance of their holding up to commendation one singular instance of Christ's divine power is not inconsistent with the narrative of Matthew, in which another, though less known man,[547] is also mentioned.

546 "Raconte combien grandes choses Dieu t'a faitcs;" — "relate how great things God hath done to thee."

547 "Combien qu'il ne lust pas rant eognu que le premier;" — "though he was not so well known as the former."

Luke 8:26. *There met him a certain man out of the city* It is uncertain whether Luke means that he was a citizen of Gadara, or that he came out of it to meet Christ. For, when he was ordered to go home and proclaim among his friends the grace of God, Mark says, that he did this in Decapolis, which was a neighboring country stretching towards Galilee; and hence it is conjectured that he was not a native of Gadara. Again, Matthew and Mark expressly state that he did not go *out of the city,* but *from the tombs,* and Luke himself, throughout the whole passage, gives us to understand that the man lived in solitary places. These words, therefore, *there met him a certain man out of the city,* I understand to mean, that, before Christ came near the city, the demoniac met him in that direction.

As to the opinion that the man dwelt among the graves, either because devils are delighted with the stench of dead bodies, or gratified by the smell of oblations, or because they watch over souls which are desirous to approach their bodies; it is an idle, and, indeed, a foolish conjecture. On the contrary, this wretched man was kept among the graves by *an unclean spirit,* that he might have an opportunity of terrifying him continually with the mournful spectacle of death, as if he were cut off from the society of men, and already dwelt among the dead. We learn from this also that the devil does not only torment men in the present life, but pursues them even to death, and that in death his dominion over them is chiefly exercised.

Mark 5:3. *And no man could bind him, not even with chains* Naturally, he was not able to break the chains; and hence we infer that Satan is sometimes permitted to make extraordinary movements, the effect of which goes beyond our comprehension and beyond ordinary means. We often perceive in madmen much greater strength than belongs to their natural capacity; and we are not at liberty to deny that, in such cases, the devil does his part when God permits him: but the force, which is described by the Evangelists, was far greater.[548] It was indeed a sad and shocking exhibition, but may serve to remind us how wretched and alarming it is to be placed under the tyranny of Satan, and also that bodily agony, however violent or cruel, is not more to be dreaded than distress of mind.

Mark 5:6 *Worshipped him*[549] The arrangement of the narrative may be thus stated. When the demoniacs came to meet him, Christ ordered *the unclean spirits to go out of them,* and then they prayed and entreated that he would not *torment them before the time* The *worship,* therefore, did not precede Christ's words: nor did they complain that Christ gave them uneasiness,[550] till he urged them to go out. We ought to be aware that they did not

548 "Mais l'effort et la violence que les Evangelistes deserlvent estoit bien autre et plus grande;" — "but the effort and the violence, which the Evangelists describe, was quite different and much greater."

549 "S'enclina devant luy;" — "kneeled down before him."

550 "Et ils ne se sont point plaints que Christ les tormentast, sinon quand il les pressoit de sortir;" — "and they did not complain that Christ tormented them, till he urged them to go out."

come of their own accord into the presence of Christ, but were drawn by a secret exercise of his authority. As they had formerly been accustomed to carry men off, in furious violence, to *the tombs,* so now a superior power compels them to appear reluctantly at the tribunal of their judge.

Hence we infer, that the whole of Satan's kingdom is subject to the authority of Christ.[551] For the devils, when Christ summons them to appear before him, are not more at their own disposal than were the wretched men whom their tyranny was wont to drive about in every direction. At length, by the secret power of Christ, they are dragged before him, that, by casting them out, he may prove himself to be the deliverer of men. Reluctantly too they *worship* him, and their rebellious complaints testify that their confession was not made from choice, but was drawn from them by force.

Matthew 8:29. *What have we to do with thee?* Willingly would they, by this word, drive him far from them. But when they see that they are held under restraint, and that it is in vain for them to decline his authority, they complain that they are *tormented before the time,* and likewise mingle entreaty. Thus we see that the devils breathe nothing but rebellion against God; and yet, with all their swelling pride, they are crushed and fall in a moment: for their malice and obstinacy, which is never subdued, ceases not to struggle against the government of God, and yet it is compelled to yield.

Christ does not openly reject, as he did on other occasions, the confession of the devil; and the reason appears to be, that their enmity towards him was so manifest, as to remove every opportunity of unfavorable or calumnious imputation. Besides, Christ paid regard to the spectators. Accordingly, when malicious and wicked men were present, he was more eager to repress calumnies, and more inclined to put a severe restraint on devils. On the present occasion, it was quite enough that the devils, while they were offering a prayer and entreaty, raged and stormed against him.

Hast thou come hither before the time to torment us? Some explain this kind of *torment* as consisting in their being compelled to set at absolute liberty the man whom they possessed. Others understand it as referring to the last day of judgment. My view of it is, that they trembled in the presence of their Judge, while they thought of their punishment: for, though Christ said nothing,[552] a bad conscience told them what they deserved. As criminals, when they come to the judgment-seat, expect their punishment, so devils and all wicked men must tremble at the sight of God, as truly as if they already experienced hell, the unquenchable fire, and the torments that await them. Now, the devils knew that Christ was the Judge of

551 "Que tout le regne de Satan est tenu en bride sous la domination de Christ;" — "that all the kingdom of Satan is kept in check under the government of Christ."

552 "Sans que Christ ouvrist sa bouche;" — "without Christ opening his mouth."

the world; and therefore we need not wonder that the sight of him impressed them with dread of immediate torment.

Were they acquainted with the day of the last judgment? This question, which some have proposed, is uncalled for. What, then, is the meaning of the phrase, *before the time?* It means that the reprobate never reckon that *the time* for punishing them is fully come: for they would willingly delay it from day to day.[553] Any measure of delay, which the Lord is pleased to allow them, is counted gain; and thus by subterfuges they endeavor to avoid his sentence, though the attempt is to no purpose.

Mark 5:9 *My name is Legion.* The devil was compelled by Christ to pronounce this word, that he might more fully display the greatness and excellence of his grace. There must have been good reasons why this man should have endured so severe a punishment as to have an army of devils, so to speak, dwelling within him. What compassion then was it, to rescue from so many deaths a man who was more than a thousand times ruined! It was a magnificent display of the power of Christ., that by his voice not one devil, but a great multitude of devils, were suddenly driven out. *Legion* denotes here not a definite number of men, but merely a great multitude.

Hence it is evident what a wretched creature man is, when he is deprived of the divine protection. Every man is not only exposed to a single devil, but becomes the retreat of vast numbers. This passage refutes also the common error, which has been borrowed by Jews and Christians from the heathens, that every man is attacked by his own particular devil? On the contrary, Scripture plainly declares, that, just as it pleases God, one devil[554] is sometimes sent to punish a whole nation, and at other times many devils are permitted to punish one man: as, on the other hand, one angel sometimes protects a whole nation, and every man has many angels to act as his guardians. There is the greater necessity for keeping diligent watch, lest so great a multitude of enemies should take us by surprise.

Mark 5:10. *And entreated him earnestly* Luke says, they requested that they might not be sent *into the deep* Some explain these words to mean that they wished to avoid uninhabited places.[555] I rather view it as referring to their rage for doing mischief. As the devils have no other object than to prowl among men, like lions in search of prey, they are grieved at being plunged into the deep, where they will have no opportunity of injuring and ruining men. That this is the true meaning may be inferred from the words of Mark, who says that they

553 "Ils voudroyent bien tousjours prolonger leur terme;" — "they would always choose to prolong their time.

554 "A scavoir que chacun hornroe ha son diable et son mauvals ange qui lui fait la guerre;" — "namely, that each man has his devil and his evil angel who makes war with him."

555 "Ce qu'aucuns exposent comme si les diables n'eussent point voulu aller en lieu desert;" — "which some explain as if the devils did not wish to go into a desert place."

requested that they might not be compelled to go *out of the country* In a word, they manifest their disposition to be such, that there is nothing which they more eagerly desire than the destruction of mankind.

Matthew 8:31. *Permit us to depart into the herd of swine* Some conjecture that they wished to attack the swine, because they are filled with enmity to all God's creatures. I do admit it to be true, that they are entirely bent on confounding and overthrowing the whole order of nature which God has appointed. But it is certain that they had a more remote object in view, to excite the inhabitants of that country to curse God on account of the loss of the swine. When the devil thunders against Job's house, he does so not from any hatred he bears to timber or stones, but in order that the good man, through impatience at suffering loss, may break out against God. Again, when Christ consents, he does not listen to their prayers, but chooses to try in this manner what sort of people the Gadarenes are. Perhaps, too, it is to punish their crimes that he grants to the devils so much power over their swine. While the reason of it is not known by us with certainty, it is proper for us to behold with reverence and to adore with devout humility, the hidden judgment of God. This passage shows also the foolish trifling of some irreligious men, who imagine that the devils are not actually existing spirits, but merely the depraved affections of men: for how could covetousness, ambition, cruelty, and deceit, enter into the swine? Let us learn also, that *unclean spirits* (as they are devoted to destruction) are the enemies of mankind; so that they plunge all whom they can into the same destruction with themselves.

Mark 5:15. *And they come to Jesus* We have here a striking proof that not all who perceive the hand of God profit as they ought to do by yielding themselves to him in sincere godliness. Having seen the miracle, the Gadarenes were afraid, because the majesty of God shone brightly in Christ. So far they did right but now that they send him out of their territories, what could have been done worse than this? They too were scattered, and here is a shepherd to collect them or rather, it is God who stretches out his arms, through his Son, to embrace and carry to heaven those who were overwhelmed by the darkness of death. They choose rather to be deprived of the salvation which is offered to them, than to endure any longer the presence of Christ.

The apparent ground of their offense is the loss of the swine, but Luke assigns a loftier cause, that they were *seized with a great fear*;[556] and certainly, if they had been exasperated by the loss which they sustained, they would not have *requested* him, but would rudely have driven him out. They honor him as God's minister, and yet are so struck with dread as to desire that he will go to a distance from them. Thus we see that they were not at all moved by a sense of the divine grace. And indeed, though all wicked men adore God, and bestow

556 " Ἐφοβήθησαν, *they were afraid,* (Mark 5:15,) is by most Commentators understood of *fear* lest they might suffer a yet greater calamity; but it rather denotes awe at the stupendous *miracle*." — *Bloomfield*

great pains on appeasing him, yet if they had their choice, they would withdraw to the greatest possible distance from him: for his face is terrible, so long as they contemplate him as a Judge, and not as a Father. The consequence is, that the gospel, which is more delightful than any thing that can be conceived, is everywhere considered to be so dismal and severe, that a good part of the world would wish that it were buried.

And yet it is true that their fear was partly occasioned by their loss. Thus at the present day, so long as men believe that the kingdom of God is opposed to their interest, either of a public or private nature, they are prepossessed by a depraved and carnal fear, and have no relish for his grace. Accordingly, when he comes, they think that God does not regard them with favor, but rather with anger, and, so far as lies in their power, they send him to another place. It is a mark of shameful insensibility in those men, that the loss of their swine gives them more alarm than the salvation of their soul would give them joy.

Luke 8:38. *And the men requested* The Gadarenes cannot endure to have Christ among them but he who has been delivered from the devil is desirous to leave his own country and follow him. Hence we learn how wide is the difference between the knowledge of the *goodness,* and the knowledge of the *power,* of God. *Power* strikes men with terror, makes them fly from the presence of God, and drives them to a distance from him: but *goodness* draws them gently, and makes them feel that nothing is more desirable than to be united to God. Why Christ refuses to have this man as one of his followers we cannot determine with certainty, if it was not that he expected the man to make himself more extensively useful by communicating to his Gentile countrymen the remarkable and extraordinary act of kindness which he had received; and this he actually did, as we are assured by Mark and Luke.

39. *Relate those things which God hath done for thee.* He bids him *relate* not his own work, but the work of *God* His design in doing so is, that he may be acknowledged to be the true minister and prophet of God, and may thus acquire authority in teaching. In this gradual manner it was proper to instruct an ignorant people who were not yet acquainted with his divinity. Though Christ is the ladder by which we ascend to God the Father, yet, as he was not yet fully manifested, he begins with the Father, till a fitter opportunity occurred.

We must now add the symbolical meaning.[557] In the person of one man Christ has exhibited to us "proof of his grace" which is extended to all mankind. Though we are not tor-

557 Nunc addenda est anagoge. — "Maintenant il rested adjouster la deduction ou derivation;" — "it now remains to add the inference or remoter instruction." — The word *anagoge,* or rather ἀναγωγὴ was technically employed by divines of the *allegorizing* school to denote the *mystical* meaning, which was the last and most recondite, as the *literal* was the first and most obvious, of the various meanings which they supposed to be contained in every verse of the Bible. Never did those men encounter a more zealous or more formidable opponent than Calvin. But, while he manfully sets his face against all that is *mystical,* when it can plead no higher authority than the ravings of a wild imagination, he is equally careful that those instructions which are indicated, though not directly conveyed, by the sacred writers, shall receive due consideration. He lays down as a general principle,

tured by the devil, yet he holds us as his slaves,[558] till the Son of God delivers us from his tyranny.[559] Naked, torn, and disfigured, we wander about,[560] till he restores us to soundness of mind. It remains that, in magnifying his grace, we testify our gratitude.

which he endeavors to support by the word of God, that the cures of bodily diseases, performed by our Lord and his apostles, were intended to be *symbolical of* the removal of spiritual diseases by the power and grace of the Great Physician. Seldom does he close his illustration of one of those miracles without adverting to the loftier and more important occasions on which the arm of the Deliverer will put forth its strength. It is to this *symbolical* meaning that Calvin, under the word ἀναγωγὴ, borrowing the language, but disavowing the principles, of an ancient school, now proceeds to draw the attention of his reader. The grounds of his opinion it were foreign to our purpose to examine, but we have judged it necessary to append this note, in order to bring out clearly what the Author means. — *Ed.*

558 "Toutesfois nous luy sommes serfs et esclaves;" — "yet we are his serfs and slaves."

559 "De la tyrannic malheureuse d'iceluy;" — "from his unhappy tyranny."

560 "Nous ne raisons que trainer ca et la estans nuds, deschirez, et dis- figurez;" — "we do but drag along here and there, being naked, torn, and disfigured."

MATTHEW 10:1-8; MARK 6:7; LUKE 9:1-2

Matthew 10:1-8	Mark 6:7	Luke 9:1-2
1. And having called the twelve disciples, [561] he gave them power against the unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure any disease and any sickness. **2**. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; **3**. Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alpheus, and Lebbeus, surnamed Thaddeus; **4**. Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. **5**. These, twelve in number, Jesus sent out, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, [562] and enter not into a city of the Samaritans: **6**. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. [563] **7**. And when you	**7**. And he calleth the twelve, and began to send them out two and two, and gave them power against [565] the unclean spirits.	**1**. And having called the twelve, [566] Jesus gave them power and authority over all devils and to cure diseases. **2**. And sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to cure the diseased.

566 "Puis apres avoir appel, ses douze disciples ensemble;" — "then after having called his twelve disciples together."

561 "Lors ayant appel, a soy ses douze disciples;" — "then having called to himself his twelve disciples."

565 "Sur les esprits immondes;" — "over the unclean spirits."

562 "N'allez point vers les Gentils;" — "go not towards the Gentiles."

563 "Mats plustost allez aux ouailles de la matson d'Israel, qui sontperies;" — "but rather go to the flocks of the house of Israel, which are lost."

have departed, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. **8**. Cure the diseased, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely you have received, freely give. [564]		

The calling of the Apostles is here described to us, not as on a former occasion, when the Lord Jesus Christ, intending to prepare them for their office, selected them for admission into his private circle. They are now called to immediate performance, are ordered to prepare themselves for the work, receive injunctions, and, that there may be no want of authority, are endued with the power of the Holy Spirit. Formerly, they were held in expectation of future labor: now, Christ announces that the hour is come when they must put their hands to the work. It is proper to observe, however, that he does not as yet speak of perpetual apostleship, but only of temporary preaching, which was fitted to awaken and excite the minds of men, that they might be more attentive to hear Christ. So then they are now sent to proclaim throughout Judea that the time of the promised restoration and salvation is at hand at a future period, Christ will appoint them to spread the Gospel through the whole world. Here, he employs them as assistants only, to secure attention to him where his voice could not reach afterwards, he will commit into their hands the office of teaching which he had discharged. It is of great importance to observe this, that we may not suppose it to be a certain and fixed rule laid down for all ministers of the word, when our Lord gives instructions to the preachers of his doctrine as to what he wishes them to do for a short time. From inattention to this point many have been led astray, so as to demand from all ministers of the word, without distinction, conformity to this rule.[567]

Matthew 10:1. *And having called the twelve disciples* The number, *twelve,* was intended to point out the future restoration of the Church. As the nation was descended from *twelve* patriarchs, so its scattered remains are now reminded by Christ of their origin, that they may entertain a fixed hope of being restored. Although the kingdom of God was not in so flourishing a state in Judea, as to preserve the nation entire, but, on the contrary, that people, which already had miserably fallen, deserved doubly to die on account of ingratitude in despising the grace which had been offered to them, yet this did not prevent a new nation

564 "Vous l'avez receu pour neant, donnez-le pour neant;" — "you have received it for nothing, give it for nothing."

567 "Voulant reigler indifferemment tous ministres de la parole selon ee qui est ici dk;" — "wishing to regulate indiscriminately all ministers of the word according to what is here said."

from afterwards springing up. At a future period, God extended far beyond Zion the scepter of the power of his Son, and caused rivers to flow from that fountain, to water abundantly the four quarters of the world. Then God assembled his Israel from every direction, and united into one body not only the scattered and torn members, but men who had formerly been entirely alienated from the people of God.

It was not without reason, therefore, that the Lord, by appointing, as it were, twelve patriarchs, declared the restoration of the Church. Besides, this number reminded the Jews of the design of his coming; but, as they did not yield to the grace of God, he begat for himself a new Israel. If you look at the beginnings, it might appear ridiculous that Christ should bestow such honorable titles on persons who were mean and of no estimation: but their astonishing success, and the wide extension of the Church, make it evident that, in honorable rank and in numerous offspring, the apostles not only are not inferior to the patriarchs, but greatly excel them.

Gave them power The apostles had almost no rank among men, while the commission which Christ gave them was divine. Besides, they had neither ability nor eloquence, while the excellence and novelty of their office required more than human endowments,[568] It was therefore necessary that they should derive authority from another source. By enabling them to perform miracles, Christ invests them with the badges of heavenly power, in order to secure the confidence and veneration of the people. And hence we may infer what is the proper use of miracles. As Christ gives to them at the same time, and in immediate connection, the appointment to be preachers of the gospel and ministers of miracles, it is plain that miracles are nothing else than seals of his doctrine, and therefore we are not at liberty to dissolve this close connection. The Papists, therefore, are guilty of forgery, and of wickedly corrupting the works of God, by separating his word from miracles.

2. *The first, Simon, who is called Peter* The Church of Rome displays extreme folly in drawing from this passage their doctrine of the primacy. That Simon Peter was the first among the apostles we readily allow, but what was true in reference to a few persons, cannot, on any proper grounds, be extended to the whole world. Besides, the circumstance of his being mentioned first, does not imply that he possessed authority over his companions. Granting all that they ask regarding Peter, his rank will be of no avail to the Roman See, till they prove that wicked and sacrilegious apostles are Peter's successors.

5. *Into the tray of the Gentiles* This makes still more evident what I have lately hinted, that the office, which was then bestowed on the apostles, had no other object than to awaken in the Jews the hope of an approaching salvation, and thus to render them more attentive

568 "Et cependant une charge si excellente et nouvelle requeroit des graces plus grandes qu'on n'en pent trouver en l'homme;" — "and yet an office so excellent and new demanded higher graces than can be found in man."

to hear Christ. On this account, he now confines within the limits of Judea their voice, which he afterwards commands to sound everywhere to the farthest limits of the world. The reason is, that he had been sent by the Father to be

the minister of circumcision, to fulfill the promises, which had anciently been given to the fathers, (Romans 15:8.)

Now God had entered into a special covenant with the family of Abraham, and therefore Christ acted properly in confining the grace of God, at the outset, to the chosen people, till the time for publishing it were fully come. But after his resurrection, he spread over all nations the blessing which had been promised in the second place, because then *the veil of the temple had been rent,* (Matthew 27:51,) and *the middle wall of partition* had been *thrown down,* (Ephesians 2:14.) If any one imagine that this prohibition is unkind, because Christ does not admit the Gentiles to the enjoyment of the gospel, let him contend with God, who, to the exclusion of the rest of the world, established with the seed of Abraham alone his covenant, on which the command of Christ is founded.

6. *But go rather to the lost sheep* The first rank, as we have said, is assigned to the Jews, because they were the firstborn; or rather, because at that time they alone were acknowledged by God to belong to his family, while others were excluded.[569] He calls them *lost sheep,* partly that the apostles, moved by compassion, may more readily and with warmer affection run to their assistance, and partly to inform them that there is at present abundant occasion for their labors. At the same time, under the figure of this nation, Christ taught what is the condition of the whole human race. The Jews, who were near to God, and in covenant with him, and therefore were the lawful heirs of eternal life, are nevertheless pronounced to be *lost,* till they regain salvation through Christ. What then remains for us who are inferior to them in honor?[570] Again, the word *sheep* is applied even to the reprobate, who, properly speaking, did not belong to the flock of God, because the adoption extended to the whole nation; as those who deserved to be rejected, on account of their treachery, are elsewhere called *the children of the kingdom,* (Matthew 8:12.) In a word, by the term *sheep,* Christ recommends the Jews to the apostles, that they may dedicate their labors to them, because they could recognize as the flock of God none but those who had been gathered into the fold.

7. *Preach, saying* This is the *preaching,*[571] I spoke of, by which Christ intended to arouse the minds of the nation to expect an approaching redemption. *The kingdom of heaven is at hand* For *the kingdom of heaven* Luke substitutes *the kingdom of God;* but the meaning is the same. It was to inform the Jews, first, that they owed their restoration to divine agency,

569 "Les autres en estans eslogncz et bannis;" — "the others being removed and banished from it."

570 "Qui n'avons point une telle prerogative;" — "who have not such a prerogative."

571 "La predication, ou publication;" — "the preaching, or publication."

and not to the kindness of men; secondly, that under the reign of God their condition would be prosperous; and, thirdly, that the happiness which had been promised to them was not earthly and fading, but heavenly and eternal.

8. *Cure the diseased* As he has bestowed on them power, so he enjoins them to be faithful and liberal in dispensing it, and charges them not to suppress that power, which had been lodged with them for the common benefit of all. By those miracles he shows why he was sent by the Father, and what was the design of his Gospel. It is not without design that he enjoins them to *raise the dead* and *heal the sick,* instead of bringing diseases on the healthy and inflicting death on the living. There is an analogy and resemblance, therefore, which those miracles bear to the office of Christ; and this is intended to inform us, that he came to bestow upon us every blessing, to rescue us from the tyranny of Satan and of death, to *heal our diseases* and sins, and to relieve us from all our miseries.

Freely you have received[572] That they may be more willing to communicate the gifts which he had bestowed on them, he declares that they were not entrusted to them for their own individual renown, but in order that they might be, as it were, a sort of channels for transmitting the *free* bounty of God. "Consider whence you derived this power. As it flowed without any merit of yours from the pure grace of God, it is proper that, through your agency, it should flow *freely* to others."

We know how unwilling every man is to communicate to others what he considers to belong to himself, and how any one who excels the rest of the brethren is apt to despise them all. No higher commendation could have been given to a liberal communication of spiritual gifts, than by the warning which Christ gives them, that no man surpasses another through his own industry, but through the undeserved kindness of God. Now Christ has presented to us in his ministers a proof of that grace which had been predicted by Isaiah, (55:1)

> Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

At the same time he shows, that no man will be a sincere minister of his word or dispenser of his grace, till he is prepared to bestow his labor *gratuitously,*[573] and that all hirelings basely corrupt and profane the sacred office of teaching. Yet it is not inconsistent with this gratuitous dispensation, that the teachers of the church receive public salaries, provided that they willingly and generously serve Christ and his church, and that their support is, in some sort, an accessory of their labor.

572 "Vous l'avez receu pour neant;" — "you have received it for nothing."

573 "S'il n'est prest de s'y employer, et d'y mettre son labor gratuitement, et sans consideration de son profit;" — "if he is not ready to be employed in it, and to bestow his labor on it gratuitously, and without regard to his own gain."

MATTHEW 10:9-15; MARK 6:8-11; LUKE 9:3-5

Matthew 10:9-15	Mark 6:8-11	Luke 9:3-5
9. Do not provide gold, nor silver, [574] nor brass in your purses, **10**. Nor scrip for the journey, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor staff: for the laborer is worthy of his food. **11**. But into whatsoever city or village you shall enter, inquire what person in it is worthy, and remain there till you depart. **12**. And when you shall enter a house, salute it. **13**. And if the house shall be worthy, may your peace come upon it: but if it shall not be worthy, may your peace return to you. **14**. And whosoever shall not receive you, or hear your words, when you go out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. **15**. Verily I say to you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and of Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.	**8**. And commanded them to take nothing for the journey, but a staff only; not a scrip, nor bread, nor money in their girdle: **9**. But to be shod with sandals, and not to wear two coats. **10**. And he said to them, Whenever you shall enter a house, remain there till you depart thence. **11**. And whoever shall not receive you or hear you, when you go out of that place, shake off the dust which is under your feet for a testimony to them. Verily I say to you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorroah in the day of judgment than for that city.	**3**. And he said to them, Carry nothing for the journey, neither a staff, nor a scrip, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two coats each. **4**. And into whatsoever house you shall enter, remain there, and depart thence. **5**. And whoever will not receive you, when you go out of that city, shake off even the dust from your feet for a testimony against them.

Matthew 10:9. *Do not provide.* As the embassy[575] was of such a nature, that Christ wished the disciples to traverse the whole of Judea within a few days, and immediately to return to him, he forbids to carry luggage with them, by which this speed may be retarded. Some have ignorantly supposed that the rule here laid down for the ministers of the word,

574 "Ne faites provision d'or ni d'argent;" — "make no provision of gold or of silver."

575 "La commission et ambassade;" — "the commission and einbassy."

or for the apostles, is perpetual. We shall presently meet with a few sentences which have a more extensive reference: but the present injunctions not to carry baggage must undoubtedly be restricted to that temporary commission of which I have already spoken. The whole of the prohibition of *gold, silver, a scrip,* and two *coats,* which is given by Matthew, must be read in immediate connection, as is evident from the other two Evangelists.

I have therefore chosen to translate υὴ κτήσησθε, *do not provide:* for our Lord simply intended to forbid them to *take any thing for the journey* They might have *scrips,* and *shoes,* and *a change of coats,* at home; but that they may be better prepared for the journey, he orders them to leave every thing that would be burdensome. Such too is the import of what Mark says, *to be shod with sandals* There is an appearance of contradiction as to the *staff,* or *stick* for, according to Mark, the *staff* is allowed, while according to Matthew and Luke it is refused. But there is an ambiguity in the use of the Hebrew word ⊠⊠⊠, *(shebet;)* and the Evangelists, though they wrote in Greek, used the word ῥάβδος in various senses. Matthew and Luke mean by it a *rod* which would be burdensome to the person who carries it: while Mark means by it a *walking-stick* to support and relieve a traveler. It is evident, that in making a journey it was customary to carry a *staff;* and hence those words of Jacob, *With my staff, I passed over this Jordan,* (Genesis 32:10,) by which he acknowledges that he came empty and without money into Syria.

10. *For the laborer is worthy of his food.* Christ anticipates an objection that might be made: for it might appear to be a harsh condition to travel through the whole of Judea without any provisions.[576] Accordingly, Christ tells them, that they have no reason to dread that they will suffer hunger; because, wherever they come, they will at least be *worthy of their food*[577] He calls them *laborers,* not that they resembled ordinary ministers, who labor in the Lord's vineyard, and who, by planting and watering, bring it into a state of cultivation; but merely because they were the heralds of a richer and more complete doctrine. They did not at that time receive the office of preaching any farther than to render the Jews attentive to the preaching of the Gospel.

11. *Inquire what person in it is worthy.* Again, they might object that they would be deprived of the food to which they were entitled, because nobody would acknowledge them as *laborers* But Christ meets this difficulty also by ordering them to make *inquiry what person* in each city is *worthy* of the message of salvation. By these words, he bids them ask, if there are any godly and upright men, who have some fear and reverence for God, and of whose readiness to receive instruction good hopes may be entertained, that they may direct their labors chiefly to them. For, as they were not at liberty to remain long in any one place, it was proper to begin with those who, in some respect were better prepared.

576 "N'ayans rien de quoy faire leurs despens;" — "having no means of paying their expenses."

577 "Ils gaigneront bien pour le moins leur nourriture;" — "they will get their food at least."

Remain there till you depart. This too has a reference to dispatch: for if they had made a longer stay in any place, it would have been necessary to change their lodging, that they might not be too burdensome to any individual. When, therefore, Christ enjoins them to remain in the house of the person who shall first receive them, *till they depart* to another city, he intimates that they must make haste, so that, after having published the Gospel in one city, they may immediately run to another.

12. *Salute it.* As they could not distinguish the devout worshippers of God from despisers, he enjoins them to address in a friendly manner any family which they may have occasion to meet. The act of *saluting* is a kind of opening to a conversation. They had already been warned to look out for persons to entertain them, whose religious zeal was generally known and believed. But as it sometimes happens that persons of lofty reputation, when they are brought to a serious trial, discover their impiety, it was proper that this rule should be expressly laid down. The meaning therefore is: "Make trial, when you first enter, whether your entertainers will cheerfully submit to hear you. Whoever shall willingly embrace your doctrine, remain in their house, that your salutation may be confirmed. If any shall reject, depart from them immediately, and, so far as lies in your power, withdraw your salutation."

13. *If it be not worthy.* The import of this mode of expression may be thus stated, — "As their ingratitude makes them unworthy to enjoy the blessing of God which you have supplicated for them, break off every bond of communication." The *word peace* refers to the mode of salutation which generally used among the Jews. As the Hebrew word ⌧⌧⌧⌧, *(shalom,) peace,* denotes *prosperity,* when they desire that any one may be well and happy, and that his affairs may succeed to his wish, they pray that he may have *peace* I do acknowledge that the apostles brought to men a different kind of peace, but it is too great a refinement of speculation to make this passage refer to the free reconciliation which takes place between God and men.

14. *And whoever will not receive you.* This awful threatening of punishment against the despisers of the gospel was intended to animate his disciples, that they might not be retarded by the ingratitude of the world. He directs the apostles, indeed, what he wishes them to do if they meet with despisers. But his principal design was that, wherever their doctrine was rejected, their well-founded grief and distress might be relieved by consolation, that they might not fail in the middle of their course. And we see how Paul, relying on this consolation, boldly sets at naught all the obstinacy of men, moves on steadily in the midst of hindrances, and boasts that he is

> a sweet savor to God, though he is the savor of death
> to them that perish, (2 Corinthians 2:15,16.)

Now, this passage shows in what estimation the Lord holds his gospel, and, indeed, as it is an inestimable treasure, they are chargeable with base ingratitude who refuse it when

offered to them. Besides, it is the scepter of his kingdom, and therefore cannot be rejected without treating him with open contempt.

Shake off the dust As the Lord here recommends the doctrine of the gospel, that all may receive it with reverence, and terrifies rebels by threatening severe punishment, so he enjoins the apostles to proclaim the vengeance which he threatens. But this they cannot do, unless they burn with very ardent zeal to make known the doctrines which they preach. We must therefore hold that no man is qualified to become a teacher of heavenly doctrine, unless his feelings respecting it be such, that he is distressed and agonized when it is treated with contempt.

To *shake off the dust from the feet* was probably a custom then prevalent in Judea, as a sign of execration; and was intended to declare that the inhabitants of the place were so polluted, that the very ground on which they trod was infected. That it was an ordinary custom I conjecture from our Lord's manner of speaking of it as a thing well known. This form of execration confirms still more what I lately mentioned, that no crime is more offensive to God than contempt of his word: for he does not enjoin them to make use of so solemn a mode in expressing their detestation of adulterers, or murderers, or any description of malefactors.

Verily, I say to you That they may not imagine this to be an idle bugbear,[578] Christ declares that those who reject the gospel, will receive more severe punishment than the inhabitants of Sodom. Some view the word *judgment* as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem. But this is foreign to our Lord's intention: for it must be understood as referring to the *general judgment,* in which both must give their account, that there may be a comparison of the punishments. Christ mentioned *Sodom* rather than other cities, not only because it went beyond them all in flagitious crimes, but because God destroyed it in an extraordinary manner, that it might serve as an example to all ages, and that its very name might be held in abomination. And we need not wonder if Christ declares that they will be treated less severely than those who refuse to hear the gospel. When men deny the authority of Him who made and formed them, when they refuse to listen to his voice, nay, reject disdainfully his gentle invitations, and withhold the confidence which is due to his gracious promises, such impiety is the utmost accumulation, as it were, of all crimes. But if the rejection of that obscure preaching was followed by such dreadful vengeance, how awful must be the punishment that awaits those who reject Christ when he speaks openly! Again, if God punishes so severely the despisers of the word, what shall become of furious enemies who, by blasphemies and a venomous tongue, oppose the gospel, or cruelly persecute it by fire and sword?

578 "Afin qu'il ne semble que ce soit une menace vaine, et (cornroe on dit) seulement pour faire peur aux petits enfans;" — "that it may not seem as if it were an idle threatening, and (as we say) only to frighten young children."

MATTHEW 10:16-20; LUKE 12:11-12

Matthew 10:16-20	Luke 12:11-12
16. Behold, I send you out, as sheep in the midst of wolves: be therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. **17**. But beware of men: for they will deliver you to the councils, and will scourge you in their synagogues: **18**. And you will be brought before rulers and kings on my account, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. **19**. But when they shall deliver you up, be not anxious [579] as to how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour [580] what you shall speak. **20**. For it is not you that speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.	**11**. And when they shall bring you into synagogues, and before magistrates and powers, do not be anxious how or what you shall answer, or what you shall say. **12**. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in the same hour [581] what you ought to say.

The injunctions which Matthew has hitherto related had no farther reference than to that former expedition or commission, which was to be terminated in a few days. But now Christ proceeds farther, and prepares them for a future period, by informing them, that they were not merely chosen for that brief exercise of preaching, but that an office of greater difficulty and of far higher importance awaited them. Though they were not immediately brought into those contests of which Christ speaks, yet it was advantageous for them to have previous warning, that any uneasiness which they might then suffer might be known to be a sort of preparative for a fiercer warfare to which they had been destined. It was no doubt true in reference to the first mission, that the apostles were *like sheep in the midst of wolves:* but as the Lord spared their weakness, and restrained the cruelty of *the wolves* from doing them any injury, these words properly relate to a subsequent period, when the Lord treated them more harshly. Before his resurrection, while *the bridegroom* was present, they were treated, so to speak, like guests at a marriage: but after the departure of *the bridegroom,* that softness and gentleness ceased, and they were reduced to such hardships as made them aware, that there were good reasons why they had been early furnished with those arms.

581 "Ace mesme instant;" — "at that very instant."

579 "N'ayez point de souci;" — "have no anxiety."

580 "Car a ce mesme instant vous sera donn, ce que vous direz;" — "for at that very instant will be given to you what you shall speak."

Perhaps, too, Matthew may have collected into one passage discourses which were delivered at different times: for Luke, as we shall afterwards see, (10:17) relates that the same things were said to the *seventy* disciples, who were placed in the room of the apostles. One thing is beyond dispute: These words did not merely foretell the consequences of that journey which they were now commencing, but gave them warning as to the whole course of their apostleship.

Matthew 10:16. *Behold, I send you out* The exhortation which immediately follows plainly shows the design of this admonition; and therefore the order of the passage must be explained in this manner: "You have need of *wisdom* and of *harmlessness,* because you will be *like sheep in the midst of wolves* " The reason is drawn from the necessity of the case: for if they did not *wisely* exercise caution, they might be immediately devoured by the *wolves;* and, on the other hand, if they trembled at the rage of the *wolves,* or were incautious, they would presently waver, and would at length fail to perform their duty.

We shall first inquire what is meant by their being sent out *as sheep in the midst of wolves* Though men are cruel and bloody, the Lord might soften their ferocious temper; for he tames and subdues, whenever he pleases, the beasts of prey. When God does not subdue a considerable portion of mankind to the obedience of the gospels but leaves them in their own savage nature, he does it on purpose to try his ministers. Though all whom God does not regenerate with the spirit of gentleness are by nature *wolves* yet this designation is applied by Christ chiefly to the enraged enemies of the gospel, who are so far from being softened by hearing the voice of the pastor that they are inflamed to greater cruelty. The Lord sends the ministers of his word on the condition of dwelling *in the midst of wolves;* that is, of having many determined enemies and of being beset on every hand by many dangers, which render it no easy matter to discharge their duty in the midst of hindrances. To make the trial more severe, he does not supply them with defensive armor, but exposes them naked and defenseless to the teeth of the *wolves*

By calling them *sheeps* he does not refer to the sweetness and mildness of their manners, or to the gentleness of their mind, but only means that they will have no greater strength or fitness for repelling the violence of enemies than *sheep* have against the rage of *wolves* Christ requires no doubt, from his disciples that they shall resemble *sheep* in their dispositions, by their patience in contending against the malice of wicked men, and by the meekness with which they endure injuries, but the simple meaning of this passage is, that many powerful and cruel enemies are arrayed against the apostles, while they, on their part, are furnished with no means of defense,[582] If it be objected, that in this way there is no contrast between *sheep* and *wolves,* the reply is easy. Though the Lords by calling the enemies of the

582 "Combien que de leur cost, ils n'ayent aucune force ou munition externe;" — "while they, on their side, have no strength or outward protection."

gospel *wolves,* expressed their power rather than their desire to do injury, yet as no man is known to be a *wolf* but by his rage against the gospel, Christ has joined these two things together, the fierce cruelty which impels them to shed blood, and the power with which they are armed.

Be therefore wise The general meaning is, that their *wisdom* in exercising caution must be so regulated, as to prevent them from being more timid than is necessary, or from becoming more sluggish in duty. We see that those who wish to pass for cautious and circumspect persons are, for the most part, timorous and lazy. It is no doubt proper for the disciples of Christ, surrounded as they are by dangers on every hand, to maintain the strictest caution; but as they are in extreme danger of being kept back by slothfulness, he bids them move forward honestly wherever their calling leads them.

This is pointed out by a twofold comparison, *wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*. Serpents, being aware that they are hated, carefully avoid and shrink from every thing that is hostile to them. In this manner he enjoins believers to take care of their life, so as not to rush heedlessly into danger, or lay themselves open to any kind of injury. *Doves,* on the other hand, though naturally timid, and liable to innumerable attacks, fly in their simplicity, imagine themselves safe till they are struck, and in most cases place themselves within the reach of the fowler's snares. To such simplicity Christ exhorts his disciples, that no excess of terror may hinder them from pursuing their course. There are some who carry their ingenious reasonings still farther as to the nature of the *serpent* and of the *dove,* but this is the utmost extent of the resemblance. We see that Christ condemns that carnal wisdom, or rather that trickery, in which the greater part of men are too fond of indulging, while they look around them on every hand to discover how far it will be safe for them to proceed; and thus, from an unwillingness to encounter danger, they renounce the call of Christ.[583]

17. *But beware of men* Erasmus has inserted the word *these, (beware of these men,)* supposing that the article has the force of a demonstrative pronoun.[584] But in my opinion

583 "Ils renoncent Christ et sa vocation;" — "they renounce Christ and his calling."

584 "Erasme a traduit, *De ces hornroes:* pource qu'il luy a sembl, que l'article Grec qul est mis avec le nora denotoit quelques certains hommes." — "Erasmus translated it, *Of these men:* because he thought that theGreek article, which is joined to the noun, denoted some particular men." —Προσέχετε δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων literally means *but beware of THE men* In Calvin's native tongue, *les hommes* denotes *men in general,* and in expressing the idea of *the men*, it became necessary to substitute *ces* for *les,* in order to avoid the circumlocution of *les hommes, dont il s'agit* But it would be proper to show cause why οἱ ἄνθρωποι should be here viewed as equivalent to πάντες ἄνθρωποι. Erasmus, writing in Latin, has supplied a defect of that language by almost the only means which he had in his power, the use of a demonstrative pronoun as a substitute for the definite article. "Cavete ab *illis* hominibus," naturally interpreting τῶν ἀνθρώπων, as referring to the men who had just been described to the disciples as *wolves,* and in their intercourse with whom the utmost caution would be indispensable. — *Ed.*

it is better to view it as indefinite, and as conveying a declaration of Christ, that caution ought to be exercised in dealing with men, among whom every thing is full of snares and injuries. But he appears to contradict himself: for the best way of exercising caution would have been to remain at home, and not to venture to appear in public. I reply, he points out here a different sort of caution, — not that terror and alarm which would keep them from discharging their duty, but a dread of being excessively annoyed by sudden calamities. We know that those who are surprised by unexpected afflictions are apt to fall down lifeless. Christ, therefore, desired that his disciples should foresee at a distance what would happen, that their minds might be early prepared for maintaining a conflict. In short, he sounds the trumpet to them, that they may quickly make ready for the battle: for as foresight, when it is excessive or attended by unnecessary anxiety, reduces many to a state of weakness, so many are intoxicated by an indolent security, and, rushing on heedlessly, give way at the critical moment.

For they will deliver you up to councils It may readily be inferred from these words, that the contests of which Christ forewarns the apostles must not be limited to the first journey, in which they met with nothing of this description. The object of this prediction is to prevent them from being ever cast down: for it was no ordinary attainment for poor and despised men, when they came into the presence of princes, to preserve composure, and to remain unmoved by any worldly splendor. He warns them, too, that not in Judea only, but in more distant places, they will be called to fight; and he does so, not merely for the purpose of preparing them by long meditation for that warfare, but that, as instructed and experienced masters, they might not scruple to yield themselves to heavenly guidance.

For a testimony to them and to the Gentiles This means that the will of God must be proclaimed even to foreign princes, and to distant nations, that they may be without excuse. Hence it follows, that the labor of the apostles will not be lost, for it will vindicate the judgment of God, when men shall be convicted of their obstinacy.

19. *Be not anxious*[585] A consolation is added: for in vain would Christ have given a hundred exhortations to the disciples, if he had not, at the same time, promised that God would be with them, and that through his power they would assuredly be victorious. Hence we infer, that Christ is very far from intending, by announcing those dangers, to abate the fervor of that zeal with which it would be necessary for the disciples to burn if they wished to discharge their duty in a proper manner. It is, no doubt, a great matter to endure the presence of princes; for not only fear, but even shame, sometimes overpowers well-regulated minds. What, then, may be expected, if princes break out into furious anger, and almost thunder?[586] Yet Christ charges his disciples not to be anxious.

585 "N'ayez point de souci;" — "have no anxiety."

586 "En sorte qu'il semblera quasi qu'ils foudroyent;" — "so that they will almost appear to thunder."

For in that hour shall be given to you what you shall speak The Spirit will suggest words to them. The more a man distrusts himself through consciousness of his own weakness, the more is he alarmed, unless he expect assistance from another quarter. Accordingly, we see that the reason why most men give way is, that they measure by their own strength, which is very small or almost nothing, the success of their undertakings. Christ forbids the disciples to look at their own strength, and enjoins them to rely, with undivided confidence, on heavenly grace. "It is not," he says, "your ability that is in question, but the power of the Holy Spirit, who forms and guides the tongues of believers to a sincere confession of their faith."

That they may not be alarmed by their present deficiency, he assures them that assistance will come *at the very instant* when it is needed. Frequently does it happen that the Lord leaves believers destitute of the gift of eloquence, so long as he does not require that they give him a testimony, but, when the necessity for it arrives, those who formerly appeared to be dumb are endued by him with more than ordinary eloquence. Thus, in our own time, we have seen some martyrs, who seemed to be almost devoid of talent, and yet were no sooner called to make a public profession of their faith, than they exhibited a command of appropriate and graceful language altogether miraculous.[587]

Yet it was not the will of Christ that the apostles should be free from all care: for it was advantageous to them to have such a measure of anxiety, as to supplicate and entreat that the Spirit might be given to them; but he desired to remove that deep and uneasy thought which almost always tends to perplex and embarrass. So long as men indulge in conjecture what is to take place, or whether this or the other thing will happen, and do not rely on the providence of God, they are kept in a wretched state of trouble and uneasiness. And, indeed, those who do not render such honor to the providence of God, as to believe that it will seasonably relieve their wants, deserve to be tormented in this manner.

587 "Et de faict, nous avons veu de nostre temps aucuns martyrs, lesquels ayans este le reste de leur vie quasi muets, et n'ayans point de grace a parler, toutesfois quand Dieu les a appelez a rendre confession de leur foy devant les ennenmis, c'a este un miracle du don excellent qu'ils out eu de parlet et respondre pertinemment et avec grace." — "And, in fact, we have seen, in our own time, some martyrs who having been the rest of their life, as it were, dumb, and having no gracefulness of speech, yet when God called them to make confession of their faith before enemies, the excellent gift which they possessed, of speaking and replying appropriately and gracefully, was quite miraculous."

MATTHEW 10:21-25; LUKE 6:40

Matthew 10:21-25	Luke 6:40
21. And the brother will deliver up the brother to death, and the father the son, and the children will rise up against the parents, and will put them to death. **22**. And you will be hated by all on account of my name: but he who shall endure to the end [588] will be saved. **23**. And when they shall persecute you in this city, flee into another: for verily I say unto you, You will not have gone over [589] all the cities of Israel, till the Son of man bec ome. **24**. The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. **25**. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and that the servant be as his lord: if they have called the master of the house himself Beelzebub, how much more his household servants?	**40**. The disciple is not above his master, but every one shall be to his master.

Matthew 10:21. *And the brother will deliver up the brother to death.* He first gives warning what heavy calamities await them, and then adds a remarkable consideration, which sweetens all their bitterness. First, he announces that those circumstances which other men find to be the means of protection, or from which they obtain some relief, will prove to the disciples a fresh addition to their misery. *Brothers,* who ought to assist them when oppressed, to stretch out their hand to them amidst their distresses, and to watch over their safety, will be their mortal enemies.

It is a mistake however, to suppose that it happens to none but believers to be *delivered up to death by their brethren:* for it is possible that a father may pursue his son with holy zeal,[590] if he perceives him to have apostatized from the true worship of God; nay, the Lord enjoins us in such a case (Deuteronomy 13:9) to forget flesh and blood, and to bestow all

588 "Qui soustiendra, *ou, tiendra bon,* jusques k la fin;" — "he who shall endure, *or hold out,* even to the end."

589 "Vous n'aurez point parachev, d'aller;" — "you will not have finished going."

590 "Par un zele sainct et plaisant a Dieu;" — "by a zeal that is holy and pleasing to God."

our care on vindicating the glory of his name.[591] Whoever has fear and reverence for God will not spare his own relatives, but will rather choose that all of them should perish, if it be found necessary, than that the kingdom of Christ should be scattered, the doctrine of salvation extinguished, and the worship of God abolished. If our affections were properly regulated, there would be no other cause of just hatred among us.

On the other hand, as Christ not only restores the kingdom of God, and raises godliness to its full vigor, but even brings men back from ruin to salvation, nothing can be more unreasonable than that the ministers of so lovely a doctrine should be hated on his account. A thing so monstrous, and so contrary to nature, might greatly distress the minds of simple men:[592] but Christ foretells that it will actually take place.

22. *But he who endured to the end shall be saved* This single promise ought sufficiently to support the minds of the godly, though the whole world should rise against them: for they are assured that the result will be prosperous and happy. If those who fight under earthly commanders, and are uncertain as to the issue of the battle, are carried forward even to death by steadiness of purpose, shall those who are certain of victory hesitate to abide by the cause of Christ to the very last?

23. *And when they shall persecute you.* He anticipates an objection that might arise. If we must encounter the resentments of the whole world, what shall be the end of all this?[593] Though it may not be safe for them to remain in any place, yet Christ warns them not to despair, but, on the contrary, when they have been driven from one place, to try whether their labors in some other place may be of any avail. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that this is a bare permission: for it is rather a command given to the disciples, what it is the will of Christ that they should do. He who has sustained one persecution would willingly withdraw as a soldier who has served his time. But no such exemption is granted to the followers of Christ, who commands them to fulfill their whole course with unabated zeal. In short, the apostles are enjoined to enter into fresh contests, and not to imagine that, when they have succeeded in one or two cases, they have fully discharged their duty. No permission is granted to them to flee to a retired spot, where they may remain unemployed, but though their labor may have been unsuccessful in one place, the Lord exhorts them to persevere.

And yet the command implies also a permission. As to avoiding persecution, it ought to be understood in this manner: we must not condemn without distinction all who flee,

591 "De maintenir la gloire de son nom, a fin que punition soit faite de l'outrage commis contre sa majeste;" — "to maintam the glory of his name, that punishment may be inflicted on the outrage comnntted against his majesty."

592 "Les gens simples, et d'esprit paisible;" — "simple people, and of peaceable dispositions."

593 "Que sera ce a la fin, et que deviendrons-nous?" — "What shall be in the end, and what will become of us?"

and yet it is not every kind of flight that is lawful. Some of the ancients carried their zeal in this matter to an extreme and condemned flight as a species of disavowal. Were this true, some part of the disgrace would fall on Christ and his apostles. Again, if all without distinction are at liberty to flee, a good pastor could not be distinguished from a hireling during a season of persecution. We must abide by the moderation which Augustine recommends, when writing to Honoratus: No man must quit his station through timidity, either by betraying the flock through cowardice, or by giving an example of slothfulness; and yet no man must expose himself precipitately, or at random. If a whole church is attacked, or if a part of them is pursued to death, the pastor, whose duty it is to expose his life in place of any individual among them, would do wrong in withdrawing. But sometimes it may happen, that by his absence he will quell the rage of enemies, and thus promote the advantage of the church. In such cases, the *harmlessness of the dove* must be his guide, that effeminate persons may not seize on his conduct as an excuse for their timidity: for the flesh is always too ingenious in avoiding what is troublesome.

For verily I say to you. These words cannot be understood in the sense which some have given to them as relating to the first mission,[594] but embrace the whole course of their apostleship. But the difficulty lies in ascertaining what is meant by the *coming of the Son of man* Some explain it as denoting such a progress of the gospel, as may enable all to acknowledge that Christ is truly reigning, and that he may be expected to restore the kingdom of David. Others refer it to the destruction of Jerusalem, in which Christ appeared taking vengeance on the ingratitude of the nation. The former exposition is admissible: the latter is too far-fetched. I look upon the consolation here given as addressed peculiarly to the apostles. Christ is said *to come,* when matters are desperate, and he grants relief. The commission which they received was almost boundless: it was to spread the doctrine of the Gospel through the whole world. Christ promises that he will *come* before they have traveled through the whole of Judea: that is, by the power of his Spirit, he will shed around his reign such luster, that the apostles will be enabled to discern that glory and majesty which they had hitherto been unable to discover.

24. *The disciple is not above his master* By his own example he now exhorts them to perseverance; and, indeed, this consolation is enough to banish all sadness, if we consider that our lot is shared with the Son of God. To make us feel deeper shame, he borrows a twofold comparison from what is customary among men. *The disciple* reckons it honorable to be placed on a level with *his master,* and does not venture to wish a higher honor, and again, *servants* do not refuse to share that condition to which their *masters* willingly submit. In both respects, the Son of God is far above us: for the Father has given to him the highest

594 "Touchant le premier voyage, ou la premiere commission qu ont eue les apostres;" — "respecting the first journey, or the first commission which the apostles had."

authority, and has bestowed on him the office of a teacher. We ought, therefore, to be ashamed of declining what he did not scruple to undergo on our account. But there is more need to meditate on these words than to explain them: for, in themselves, they are sufficiently clear.

Luke 6:40. *The disciple is not above his master, but every one shall be conformed to his master* Luke gives this sentence without any connection, as if it had been spoken abruptly in the midst of other discourses; but as Matthew explains very clearly, in this passage, to what it relates, I have chosen not to insert it in any other place. With respect to the translation, I have chosen neither to follow Erasmus nor the old translator, and for the following reason: — The participle κατηρτισμένος, signifies *perfect,* but signifies also *fit and suitable* Now, as Christ is speaking, not about perfection, but about resemblance, and must therefore mean, that nothing is more *suitable* for a *disciple* than to be formed after the example of his *master,* the latter meaning appeared to me to be more appropriate.

25. *If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub* This is equivalent to calling himself Lord of the Church, as the apostle, when comparing him to Moses and the prophets, (Hebrews 3:1,) says, that they were *servants,* but that he is the Son and heir. Though he bestows on them the honor of *calling them brethren,* (Hebrews 2:11,) yet he is *the first-born* (Romans 8:29) and head of the whole church; and, in short, he possesses supreme government and power. Nothing, therefore, can be more unreasonable than to wish to be accounted believers, and yet to murmur against God when he *conforms us to the image of his Son,* whom he has placed over all his family. To what sort of delicacy do we pretend, if we wish to hold a place in his house, and to be above the Lord himself? The general meaning is, that we carry our delicacy and tenderness to excess, if we account it a hardship to endure reproaches to which our Prince willingly submitted.

Beelzebub is a corrupted term, and would have been more correctly written *Baalzebub*. This was the name given to the chief of the false gods of the Philistines, who was worshipped by the inhabitants of Ekron, (2 Kings 1:2.) *Baalim* was the name of the inferior deities, whom the Papists of our day call *patrons*. Now, as Baalzebub means *the patron of the fly,* or *of the flies,* some have thought that he was so called on account of the great multitude of *flies* in the temple, occasioned by the number of sacrifices; but I rather conjecture that the assistance of the idol was implored against *the flies* which infested that place. When Ahazlah, under the influence of superstition, applied to him to be informed about his recovery, he gave him this name, which would appear from that circumstance not to be a term of reproach. But as the name *gehenna* was applied by holy men to hell, in order to stamp that place with infamy, so, in order to express their hatred and detestation of the idol, they gave the name *Beelzebub* to the devil. Hence we infer that wicked men, for the purpose of rendering Christ detestable to the multitude, employed the most reproachful term which they could invent, by calling him *the devil,* or, in other words, the greatest enemy of religion. If we happen to

be assailed by the same kind of reproach, we ought not to think it strange, that what began in the head should be completed in the members.

MATTHEW 10:26-31; MARK 4:22-23;
LUKE 8:17; 12:2-7

Matthew 10:26-31	Mark 4:22-23	Luke 8:17
26. Fear them not therefore: for nothing is covered that shall not be revealed, and nothing is hid that shall not be known. **27**. What I say to you in darkness speak you in light: and what you hear in the ear proclaim on the housetops. **28**. And fear not those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul: but rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in gehenna. **29**. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and not one of them shall fall to the ground without your Father? **30**. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. **31**. Fear not therefore: you are of more value than many sparrows.	**22**. For nothing is hid which shall not be revealed; and nothing is secret that shall not come to light. **23**. If any man have ears to hears, let him hear.	**17**. For there is nothing hid that shall not be revealed, and nothing concealed that shall not be known and come to light. Luke 12:2-7 **2**. For nothing is covered which shall not be laid open, and nothing is hid wich shall not be known. **3**. Therefore, those things which you have spoken in darkness shall be heard in light: and what you have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed on the housetops. **4**. And I say to you my friends, Be not afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. **5**. And I will show you whom you should fear: fear him who, after that he hath killed, hath power to throw into gehenna: yea, I say to you, Fear him. **6**. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? **7**. But even the hairs on your head are all numbered: fear not therefore: you are of

		more value than many sparrows.

Matthew 10:26. *Fear them not therefore* When the apostles saw the gospel so greatly despised, and recollected the small number of believers, they might be apt to throw away hope even for the future. Christ now meets this doubt, by declaring that the gospel would be widely spread, would at length rise superior to all the hindrances which might arise from men, and would become generally known. The saying, *nothing is covered that shall not be revealed,* has some appearance of being a proverb: but we restrict it in a special manner to the doctrine of salvation, which Christ promises will be victorious, whatsoever may be the contrivances of men to oppose it. Though he sometimes preached openly in the temple, yet, as his doctrine was rejected, it was still *concealed* in dark comers: but he declares that the time for proclaiming it will come; which, we know, happened shortly afterwards. In no part of the earth was there ever such thunder heard as the voice of the gospel, which resounded through the whole world. As this promise ought to fill them with courage, Christ exhorts them to devote themselves to it with boldness and perseverance, and not to be alarmed, though they see the gospel hitherto despised, but, on the contrary, to become its zealous preachers.

The passage which I have taken from Mark was, perhaps, spoken at a different time, and in a different sense: but as the sentences in that place are concise, I have followed the meaning which appeared to me the most probable. After having commanded the apostles to assemble *burning lamps by* sending out a bright light to a great distance, he immediately afterwards adds, *nothing is hidden which shall not be revealed*. Now the *lamp* of the gospel was kindled by the apostles, as it were in the midst of darkness, that by their agency it might be raised on high, and shine throughout the whole world. The passage in the eighth chapter of Luke's Gospel is precisely alike. As to the passage in the twelfth chapter, there is no room to doubt that it has the same meaning, though there is a difference in the words: for Christ there commands the apostles *to bring to light what they had spoken in darkness*. This means, that hitherto they had only spoken in whispers about the gospel, but that their future preaching would be so public, that it would spread to the most distant parts of the world.

28. *And fear not those who kill the body* To excite his disciples to despise death, Christ employs the very powerful argument, that this frail and perishing lift ought to be little regarded by men who have been created for a heavenly immortality. The statement amounts to this, that if believers will consider for what purpose they were born, and what is their condition, they will have no reason to be so earnest in desiring an earthly life. But the words have still a richer and fuller meaning: for we are here taught by Christ that the fear of God is dead in those men who, through dread of tyrants, fall from a confession of their faith, and

that a brutish stupidity reigns in the hearts of those who, through dread of death, do not hesitate to abandon that confession.

We must attend to the distinction between the two opposite kinds of *fear*. If the *fear* of God is extinguished by the dread of men, is it not evident that we pay greater deference to them than to God himself? Hence it follows, that when we have abandoned the heavenly and eternal life, we reserve nothing more for ourselves than to be *like the beasts that perish,* (Psalm 49:12.) God alone has the power of bestowing eternal life, or of inflicting eternal death. We forget God, because we are hurried away by the dread of men. Is it not very evident that we set a higher value on the shadowy life of the body[595] than on the eternal condition of the soul; or rather, that the heavenly kingdom of God is of no estimation with us, in comparison of the fleeting and vanishing shadow of the present life?

These words of Christ ought therefore to be explained in this manner: "*Acknowledge* that you have received immortal souls, which are subject to the disposal of God alone, and do not come into the power of men. The consequence will be, that no terrors or alarms which men may employ will shake your faith. "For how comes it that the dread of men prevails in the struggle, but because the body is preferred to the soul, and immortality is less valued than a perishing life?"

Luke 12:5. *Yea, I say to you, Fear Him* This is an emphatic,[596] repetition of the statement. Christ must be viewed as saying, that when we give way to the dread of men, we pay no respect to God; and that if on the contrary we *fear* God, we have an easy victory in our hands, so that no efforts of men will draw us aside from our duty. The experience of every age shows the great necessity of this exhortation to the ministers of Christ, and likewise to all believers in general: for there never was a period when men did not rise furiously against God, and endeavor to overwhelm the Gospel.[597] All are not armed indeed with equal power to hold out to believers the dread of death, but the greater number are animated by that savage ferocity, which discovers itself as soon as an opportunity occurs. Frequently, too, Satan brings forward giants, in whose presence the servants of Christ would fall down lifeless, were it not that this doctrine fortifies them to maintain unshaken perseverance.

The two clauses being very closely related to each other, it is an incorrect view which some unskilful persons take, by reading separately this clause, *Fear them not* For Christ, (as we have already said,) in order to cure that wicked *fear* of men, which draws us aside from the right path contrasts with it a devout and holy fear of God: otherwise the consequence would not follow that, if we fear God, who is the Lord of body and soul, we have no reason

595 "La vie de ce corps, laquelle n'est qu'une fumee;" — "the life of this body, which is but *a vapor,*" (James 4:14.)

596 "Emporte poids;" — "carries weight.

597 "S'esforcans d'abattre et exterminer l'Evangile;" — "laboring to destroy and exterminate the Gospel."

to fear men, whose power goes no farther than the body. With regard to the statement that men *have power to kill the body,* Christ made it by way of concession. God allows wicked men to enjoy such a degree of liberty, that they are swelled with confidence in their own power, imagine that they may attempt any thing, and even succeed in terrifying weak minds, as if they could do whatever they pleased. Now the proud imaginations of wicked men, as if the life of the godly were placed at their disposal, is utterly unfounded: for God keeps them within limits, and restrains, whenever it pleases him, the cruelty and violence of their attacks. And yet they are said to *have power to kill* by his permission, for he often permits them to indulge their cruel rage. Besides, our Lord's discourse consists of two parts. First, in order to instruct us to bear with composure the loss of the bodily life, he bids us contemplate both eternal life and eternal death, and then arrives gradually at this point, that the protection of our life is in the hand of God.

Matthew 10:29. *Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?* Christ proceeds farther, as I have already hinted, and declares that tyrants, whatever may be their madness, have no power whatever even over the body: and that therefore it is improper in any persons to dread the cruelty of men, as if they were not under the protection of God. In the midst of dangers, therefore, let us remember this second consolation. As God is the guardian of our life, we may safely rely on his providence; nay, we do him injustice, if we do not entrust to him our life, which he is pleased to take under his charge. Christ takes a general view of the providence of God as extending to all creatures, and thus argues from the greater to the less, that we are upheld by his special protection. There is hardly any thing of less value than *sparrows,* (for *two* were then *sold for a farthing,* or, as Luke states it, five for two farthings,) and yet God has his eye upon them to protect them, so that nothing happens to them by chance. Would He who is careful about the *sparrows* disregard the life of men?

There are here two things to be observed. First, Christ gives a very different account of the providence of God from what is given by many who talk like the philosophers, and tell us that God governs the world, but yet imagine providence to be a confused sort of arrangement, as if God did not keep his eye on each of the creatures. Now, Christ declares that each of the creatures in particular is under his hand and protection, so that nothing is left to chance. Unquestionably, the will of God is contrasted with *contingence* or uncertainty[598] , And yet we must not be understood to uphold *the fate* of the *Stoics,*[599] for it is one thing to

598 "La volonte de Dieu est mise a l'opposite de ce que tels Philosophes appellent Contingence: par lequel mot ils signifient un accident qui vient de soy és choses, sans qu'il y ait une certaine conduite d'enhaut." — "The will of God is contrasted with what such Philosophers call Contingence: a term by which they denote an accident which comes of its own accord in events, without any fixed direction of it from above."

599 We have formerly adverted to a leading tenet of the *Stoics,* that the distinction between pleasure and pain is imaginary, and that consequently the highest wisdom consists in being utterly unmoved by the events of life. The present allusion is to their notion of *Fate,* a mysterious and irresistible necessity, over which those beings

imagine a necessity which is involved in a complicated chain of causes, and quite another thing to believe that the world, and every part of it, is directed by the will of God. In the nature of things, I do acknowledge there is uncertainty:[600] but I maintain that nothing happens through a blind revolution of chance, for all is regulated by the will of God.

The second thing to be observed is, that we ought to contemplate Providence, not as curious and fickle persons are wont to do, but as a ground of confidence and excitement to prayer. When he informs us that *the hairs of our head are all numbered,* it is not to encourage trivial speculations, but to instruct us to depend on the fatherly care of God which is exercised over these frail bodies.

31. *You are of more value* This is true in general of all men, for the *sparrows* were created for their advantage. But this discourse relates peculiarly to the sons of God, who possess a far higher right than what they derive from creation. Now the rank which belongs to men arises solely from the undeserved kindness of God.

whom they blindly worshipped were supposed to have as little control as the inhabitants of the earth. Calvin demonstrates that the serenity of a Christian differs not more widely from Stoical *apathy,* than the doctrine of a special Providence which is here taught by our Savior differs from Stoical *Fate;* that the believer in Providence adores *the high and lofty One that inhabiteth, eternity,* (Isaiah 57:15,) who *hath, prepared His throne in the heavens, and whose kingdom ruleth over all,* (Psalm 103:19;) and, far from viewing the will of God as swayed by a higher power, traces every event to *the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will,* (Ephesians 1:11.) — *Ed*

600 "Je confesse bien que si on regarde la nature des choses en soy, on trouvera qu'il y a quelque Contingence;" — "I readily acknowledge that, if the nature of things in itself be considered, it will be found that there is some uncertainty."

MATTHEW 10:32-35; MARK 8:38;
LUKE 9:26; 12:8-9, 51-53

Matthew 10:32-35	Mark 8:38	Luke 9:26
32. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father, who is in heaven. **33**. And whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, who is in heaven. **34**. Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. **35**. For I have come to set a man at variance against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And the persons of a man's household shall be his enemies.	**38**. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.	**26**. For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him will the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory,[601] and [in the glory] of the Father, and of the holy angels. **Luke 12:8-9, 51-53** **8**. And I say to you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. **9**. And he who shall deny me before men, will be denied before the angels of God.—(Same chapter.) **51**. Do you suppose that I came to send peace on earth? I tell you no; but division. **52**. For henceforth there will be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. **53**. The father will be divided against the son, and the son against the father: the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother: the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the

601 "En sa majesté;" — -"in his majesty."

		daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.

Matthew 10:32. *Whosoever therefore shall confess me* He now applies to his present subject what he formerly said in a general manner about contempt of death: for we must struggle against the dread of death, that it may not *keep* us back from an open confession of faith, which God strictly demands, and which the world cannot endure. For this purpose the disciples of Christ must be bold and courageous, that they may be always ready for martyrdom. Now *confession* of Christ, though it is regarded by the greater part of men as a trifling matter, is here represented to be a main part of divine worship, and a distinguished exercise of godliness. And justly is it so represented: for if earthly princes, in order to enlarge and protect their glory, and to increase their wealth, call their subjects to arms, why should not believers maintain, at least in language, the glory of their heavenly King?

It is therefore certain that those persons extinguish faith, (as far as lies in their powers) who inwardly suppress it, as if the outward profession of it were unnecessary. With good reason does Christ here call us his witnesses, by whose mouth his name shall be celebrated in the world. In other words, he intends that the profession of his name shall be set in opposition to false religions: and as it is a revolting matter, he enjoins the testimony which we must bear, that the faith of each person may not remain concealed in the heart, but may be openly professed before men. And does not he who refuses or is silent *deny* the Son of God, and thus banish himself from the heavenly family?

A more public confession of faith, no doubt, is demanded from teachers than from persons in a private station. Besides, all are not endued with an equal measure of faith, and in proportion as any one excels in the gifts of the Spirit, he ought to go before others by his example. But there is no believer whom the Son of God does not require to be his witness. In what place, at what time, with what degree of frequency, in what manner, and to what extent, we ought to profess our faith, cannot easily be determined by a fixed rule: but we must consider the occasion, that not one of us may fail to discharge his duty at the proper time. We must also ask from the Lord the spirit of wisdom and courage, that under his direction we may know what is proper, and may boldly follow whatever we shall have ascertained that he commands us.

Him will I also confess. A promise is added to inflame our zeal in this matter. But we must attend to the points of contrast. If we draw a comparison between ourselves and the Son of God, how base is it to refuse our testimony to him, when on his part he offers his testimony to us by way of reward? If mortals, and men who are of no worth, are brought into comparison with God and the angels and all the heavenly glory, how much more valuable is that which Christ promises than that which he requires? Although men are un-

believing and rebellious, yet the testimony which we deliver to them is estimated by Christ as if it had been made in the presence of God and of the angels.

Thus also by way of amplification, Mark and Luke[602] add, *in this adulterous and sinful generation;* the meaning of which is, that we must not imagine our labor to be lost, because there is a want of proper disposition in our hearers. Now if any one is not sufficiently moved by the promise, it is followed by an awful threatening. When Christ shall make his appearance to judge the world, he will *deny* all who have basely *denied him before men* Let the enemies of the cross now go away, and flatter themselves in their hypocrisy, when Christ blots their names out of the book of life: for whom will God acknowledge as his children at the last day, but those who are presented to him by Christ? But he declares that he will bear witness against them, that they may not insinuate themselves on false grounds. When it is said that Christ will come *in the glory of the Father and of the angels,* the meaning is, that his divine glory will then be fully manifested; and that the *angels,* as they now surround the throne of God, will render their services to him by honoring his majesty. The passage from the twelfth chapter of Luke's Gospel corresponds to the text of Matthew. What we have inserted out of the ninth chapter, and out of Mark, appears to have been spoken at another time: but as the doctrine is quite the same, I have chosen to introduce them together.

Luke 12:51. *Do you suppose that I came to send peace on the earth?* What Christ has now demanded from his disciples any one of them would reckon it an easy matter to give, if the whole world, with one consent, embraced the doctrine of the Gospel. But as a considerable part of the world not only opposes but fights keenly against it, we cannot *confess* Christ without encountering the resistance and hatred of many. Christ therefore warns his followers to prepare for battle, for they must necessarily fight for the testimony of truth. And here he meets two stumbling-blocks, which otherwise would greatly have distressed weak minds. The prophets everywhere promise that there will be peace and tranquillity under the reign of Christ. What then were his disciples entitled to expect but that, wherever they went, all would instantly be at peace? Now as Christ is called *our peace,* (Ephesians 2:14,) and as the Gospel reconciles us to God, it follows, that he also establishes a brotherly harmony amongst us. The kindling of wars and contentions in the world where the Gospel is preached, does not seem to agree with the predictions of the prophets, and still less with the office of Christ, and with the nature of the Gospel.

But that *peace* which the prophets describe in lofty terms, is associated with faith, and has no existence but among the sincere worshippers of God, and in the consciences of the godly. To unbelievers it does not come, though it is offered to them; nay, they cannot endure to be reconciled to God: and the consequence is, that the message of peace excites in them

602 This is a blunder: for the clause in question is not found in *Luke,* but *in Mark* only. The french version sets the matter right. — *Ed.*

a greater tumult than before. As Satan, who holds a kingly power over the reprobate, is furious against the name of Christ, as soon as the doctrine of the Gospel is proclaimed to them, their impiety, which formerly lay asleep, acquires fresh vigor. Thus Christ, who properly speaking, is the author of *peace,* becomes the occasion of disturbances in consequence of the wickedness of men.

Let us hence learn how great is the depravity of corrupt nature, which not only soils a gift so inestimable, but changes it into a most destructive evil. Meanwhile, if tumults arise at the commencement of the reign of Christ, let us not be alarmed at it, as if it were strange or unusual: for he compares his Gospel to a sword, and says that it is διαμερισμὸς, *separation* Some think that this is intended to describe the punishment which was inflicted on the despisers of the Gospel, by their rising in hostility against each other. But the context shows, that Christ is here exhorting his disciples to perseverance, though a good part of the world should be at variance with them, and though their voice should be like a war-trumpet to call innumerable enemies to arms.

Matthew 10:35 *To set a man at variance* Hence we see more clearly what was stated a little before, that wars and tumults arise, contrary to the nature of the Gospel, through the fault of wicked men. What Malachi says about John the Baptist, [4:5,6] applies to all the ministers of Christ. They are sent for this purpose *to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers.* But in consequence of the malice of wicked men, those who were formerly combined no sooner hear the voice of Christ than they separate into opposite parties, and proceed so far as to break up the ties of relationship. In a word, Christ foretells that the world will come to such a state of confusion, that all the bonds of kindred will be treated with indifference, and humanity will be no longer regarded. When Micah complains [7:6] that *a man's enemies are the men of his own house,* he deplores it as a state of extreme and ruinous corruption. Christ declares that the same thing will happen when his doctrine shall be published, which otherwise could not have been believed. At the same time, he does not mean that this will uniformly take place, as certain fretful persons foolishly imagine that it will be impossible for them to be good disciples without forsaking parents, children, and wives. On the contrary, every lawful bond of union is confirmed by unity of faith: only Christ warns his followers, that when it does happen, they must not be alarmed.

MATTHEW 10:37-42; MARK 9:41; LUKE 14:25-33

Matthew 10:37-42	Mark 9:41	Luke 14:25-32
37. He who loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. **38**. And he who doth not take his cross and follow me, [603] is not worthy of me. **39**. He who findeth his life [604] shall lose it; and he who loseth his life for my sake shall find it. [605] **40**. He who receiveth you receiveth me: and he who receiveth me receiveth him who sent me. **41**. He who receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward: he who receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall a righteous man's reward. **42**. And whosoever shall give to one of these little ones to drink a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.	**41**. For whosoever shall give to you to drink a cup of water in my name, because you belong to Christ, verily I say to you, he shall not lose his reward.	**25**. And great multitudes went with him, and he turned, and said to them, **26**. If any man cometh to me, [606] and hateth not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, and even his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. **27**. And whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. **28**. For who is there among you that wishes to build a tower, and does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he have what is necessary to finish it? **29**. Lest after he hath laid the foundation, all who see him begin to mock him, **30**. Saying, this man began to build, and was not able to complete it. **31**. Or what king, who is setting out to make war against another king, does not first sit down and consider whether or not he will be able, with ten thousand, to meet him who cometh against him with twenty

606 "Si aucun vient avec moy;" — "if any man cometh with me."

603 "Et vient apres moy;" — -"and cometh after me."

604 "Qui aura trouve, *ou, garde* sa vie;" — "he who shall have found, or, *protected,* his life."

605 "La trouvera, *ou, gardera*;" — "will find it, or, *will protect it* "

		thousand? **32**. Otherwise, while the other is still at a distance, he sends an embassy, and requests conditions of peace. **33**. So then every one of you who forsaketh not all that he possesses, cannot be my disciple.

Matthew 10:37. *He who loveth father or mother* As it is exceedingly harsh, and is contrary to natural feelings, to make enemies of those who ought to have been in closest alliance with us, so Christ now says that we cannot be his disciples on any other condition. He does not indeed enjoin us to lay aside human affections, or forbid us to discharge the duties of relationship, but only desires that all the mutual love which exists among men should be so regulated as to assign the highest rank to piety. Let the husband then love his wife, the father his son, and, on the other hand, let the son love his father, provided that the reverence which is due to Christ be not overpowered by human affection. For if even among men, in proportion to the closeness of the tie that mutually binds us, some have stronger claims than others, it is shameful that all should not be deemed inferior to Christ alone. And certainly we do not consider sufficiently, or with due gratitude, what it is to be a disciple of Christ, if the excellence of this rank be not sufficient to subdue all the affections of the flesh. The phrase employed by Luke is more harsh, *if any man doth not hate his father and mother,* but the meaning is the same, "If the love of ourselves hinder us from following Christ, we must resist it, courageously:" as Paul says,

what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, (Philippians 3:7,8.)

38. *He who doth not take up his cross* From particular cases he proceeds to general views, and informs us that we cannot be reckoned his disciples unless we are prepared to endure many afflictions. If we are vexed and tormented by the thought, that the gospel should set us at variance with our father, or our wife, or our children, let us remember this condition, that Christ subjects all his disciples to *the cross* Yet let us also bear in mind this consolation, that, in *bearing the cross,* we are the companions of Christ, — which will speedily have the effect of allaying all its bitterness. The reprobates are not less firmly bound to their *cross,* and cannot with their most violent struggles shake it off; but as to those who are out of Christ the cross is accursed, a mournful end awaits them. Let us therefore learn to connect these two things, that believers must bear the cross in order to follow their Master; that is, in order to conform to his example, and to abide by his footsteps like faithful companions.

39. *He who findeth his life* Lest the former doctrine, which is very difficult and troublesome to the flesh, should have little weight with us, Christ confirms it in two ways by this statement. He affirms that persons of excessive caution and foresight, when they look upon themselves as having very well defended their *life,* will be disappointed and will *lose* it; and, on the other hand, that those who disregard their *life* will sustain no loss, for they will recover it. We know that there is nothing which men will not do or leave undone for the sake of *life,* (so powerful is that attachment to it which is natural to us all;) and, therefore, it was necessary that Christ should employ such promises and threatenings in exciting his followers to despise death.

To find the life means here to possess it, or to have it in safe keeping. Those who are excessively desirous of an earthly life, take pains to guard themselves against every kind of danger, and flatter themselves with unfounded confidence, as if they were looking well to themselves, (Psalm 49:18:) but their life, though defended by such powerful safeguards, will pass away; for they will at last die, and death will bring to them everlasting ruin. On the other hand, when believers surrender themselves to die, their *soul,* which appears to vanish in a moment, passes into a better life. Yet as persons are sometimes found, who heedlessly lay down their life, either for the sake of ambition or of madness, Christ expressly states the reason why we ought to expose ourselves to death.

It is uncertain if the discourse, which is related by *Luke,* was delivered on another occasion. There, too, our Lord exhorts his followers to *bear the cross,* but does not dwell upon it at equal length. To support this sentiment he immediately adds two comparisons, of which Matthew takes no notice: but as the subject treated is substantially the same, I have not scrupled to introduce in this place what we find in Luke.

Luke 14:28. *For which of you, etc ,* That no one may think it hard to follow Christ on the condition of renouncing all his desires, a useful warning is here given. We must consider beforehand what the profession of the gospel demands. The reason why many persons yield to very slight temptations is, that they have pictured to themselves unmixed enjoyment, as if they were to be always in the shade and at their ease. No man will ever become fit to serve Christ till he has undergone a long preparation for warfare.

Now the comparisons are exceedingly adapted to this object. *Building* is a tedious and vexatious matter, and one that gives little satisfaction on account of the expense. *War,* too, brings along with it many inconveniences, and almost threatens destruction to the human race, so that it is never undertaken but with reluctance. And yet the advantages of *building* are found to be sufficient to induce men to spend their substance on it without hesitation; while necessity drives them to shrink from no expenses in carrying on *wars*. But a far more valuable reward awaits those who are the *builders* of the temple of God, and who fight under the banner of Christ: for Christians do not labor for a temporary building, or fight for a passing triumph.

If a king find himself unable to endure the burden of a war,[607] he prevents an ignominious defeat by seeking peace with his adversary. The statements which our Lord makes to this effect must not be applied to the present subject, in such a manner as if we were to enter into any compromise with our spiritual foe, when our strength and resources fail. It would be idle to treat parables as applying in every minute point[608] to the matter in hand. But our Lord simply means that we ought to be so well prepared, as not to be taken by surprise for want of a proper defense, or basely to turn our backs: for it is not every one of us who is a *king,* to carry on *war* under his direction.

This doctrine reproves the rashness of those who foolishly proceed beyond their capacity, or flatter themselves without thinking of *bearing the cross* Yet we must take care lest this meditation, to which Christ exhorts us, should fill us with alarm or retard our progress. Many persons, not having from the outset laid their account with suffering, relax their zeal through cowardice: for they cannot endure to be Christians on any other condition than that of being exempted from the *cross* Others again, when a condition that is harsh and unpleasant to the flesh is proposed to them, do not venture to approach to Christ. But there is no good reason for being discouraged by a knowledge of our poverty, for the Lord grants to us seasonable aid. I readily acknowledge that, if we calculate the expense, we are all destitute of power to lay a single stone, or to wield a sword against the enemy. But as the materials, expense, arms, and forces, are supplied by the Lord out of heaven, no pretext on the score of difficulty can be offered by our indifference or sloth. The design of Christ, therefore, is to warn his followers to *bear the cross,* that they may prepare themselves with courage.

Luke 14:33. *So then every one of you* This clause shows what is meant by the *calculation of expenses,* with which Christ enjoins his followers to begin: it is to lead them to consider that they must *forsake all* In vain do persons who are delighted with an easy, indolent life, and with exemption from the *cross,* undertake a profession of Christianity. Those persons are said to *forsake all* who prefer Christ so greatly, both to their own life, and to all the wishes of the flesh, that nothing deters them from the right course.

It would be absurd to insist on a literal interpretation of the phrase, as if no man were a disciple of Christ, till he threw into the sea all that he possessed, divorced his wife, and bade farewell to his children. Such idle dreams led foolish people to adopt a monastic life, as if those who intend to come to Christ must leave off humanity. Yet no man truly forsakes all that he possesses till he is prepared at every instant to leave all, gives himself free and unconstrained to the Lord, and, rising above every hindrance, pursues his calling. Thus the

607 "Pour soustenir une guerre, et fournir l'argent qu'il faut" — "to support a war, and to supply the money that is required."

608 "De vouloir esplucher tout par le menu, et rapporter tout jusqu'aux petits mots;" — "to wish to explain every thing minutely, and to make every thing apply down to the smallest words."

true self-denial which the Lord demands from his followers does not consist so much in outward conduct as in the affections; so that every one must employ the time which is passing over him without allowing the objects which he directs by his hand to hold a place in his heart.

Matthew 10:40. *He who receiveth you, receiveth me.* A considerable portion of the world may be opposed to the disciples of Christ, and the confession of their faith may draw upon them universal hatred. Yet here is another consolation tending to excite a very great number of persons to treat them with kindness. Whatever is done to them, Christ does not hesitate to reckon as done to himself. This shows how dearly he loves them, when he places to his own account the kind offices which they have received. He is not speaking here about *receiving* the doctrine, but about *receiving* the men. The latter meaning, I admit, arises out of the former, but we must attend to the design of Christ. Perceiving that this was exceedingly adapted to support their weakness, he intended to assure them that, if any one would receive them in a friendly manner, and do them kind offices, he would be as highly pleased as if their benevolence had been exercised towards his own person; and not only so, but that in such a sacrifice God the Father would *smell a sweet savor,* (Genesis 8:21.)

41. *He who receiveth a prophet* He begins with the prophets, but at length comes down to the lowest rank, and embraces all his disciples. In this manner he commends all, without exception, who truly worship God and love the gospel. *To receive* a person *in the name of a prophet,* or *in the name of a righteous man,* means to do them good for the sake of honoring their doctrine, or of paying respect to piety. Though God enjoins us to perform offices of kindness to all mankind, yet he justly elevates his people to a higher rank, that they may be the objects of peculiar regard and esteem.

Shall receive a prophet's reward This clause is variously interpreted by commentators. Some think that it denotes a mutual compensation, or, in other words, that spiritual benefits are bestowed on the *prophets* of God instead of temporal benefits. But if this exposition is admitted, what shall we say is meant by the *righteous man's reward?* Others understand it to mean, that those who shall be kind to them will partake of the same *reward* which is laid up for *prophets* and *righteous* men. Some refer it to the intercourse of saints, and suppose it to mean, that as by our kind actions we give evidence that we are one body with the servants of Christ, so in this way we become partakers of all the blessings which Christ imparts to the members of his body.

I consider it simply as denoting the *reward* which corresponds to the rank of the person to whom kindness has been exercised; for Christ means that this will be a remarkable proof of the high estimation in which he holds his *prophets,* and indeed all his disciples. The greatness of the reward will make it evident, that not one kind office which was ever rendered to them has been forgotten.

By way of amplification, he promises a reward to the very meanest offices of kindness, such as *giving them a cup of cold water,* He gives the name of *little ones* not only to those who occupy the lowest place, or are held in least estimation in the Church, but to all his disciples, whom the pride of the world tramples under foot.

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incu en plusieurs assaux, s'est finalement rue furieusement, et de toute sa force, pour voir s'il pourroit d'aventure veincre finalement celuy duquel il n'avoit peu venir a bout. Car d'autant plus qu'on est exere aux combats spirituels, Dieu permet aussi qu'on soit plus rudement assailli. Parquoy apprenons a ne nous lasser jamais, jusqu'a ce qu' ayans paracheve tout le cours de notre guerre, nous soyons parvenus au but: 187
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